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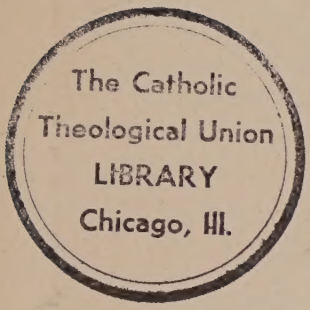

Sunday School SERMONETTES

A Three Years' Course of Brief and Practical Instructions on Catholic Doctrine and Practice

WITHDRAWN

By

CANON J. S. RICHTER

JOSEPH F. WAGNER, INC.
NEW YORK
LONDON: B. HERDER

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Archbishop of New York

New York, August 5, 1919

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SUNDAY SCHOOL SERMONETTES

A Course of Instructions in Christian Doctrine

I. THE CREED

1. What Is Meant By Faith?

As our holy religion is based solely upon faith, we ought to know clearly what faith is.

In general terms faith is the acceptance as true of a fact previously unknown, on the testimony of a trustworthy witness. So we believe that the whole human race perished at the deluge with the exception of Noe and his family, and we believe it, because Moses, a man of God, recorded it in writing.

Further, faith is the conviction, derived from adequate reasons, of the truth of something that we do not know by experience. Thus we believe that all men will rise again from the dead, because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, rose again after He had died on the Cross, and in this way convinced us that we should all eventually rise again.

Faith is confidence in reliance upon, reverence for, and self-surrender to, something higher and greater than oneself. Children show us what faith is when they believe all that they are told by their elders.

Faith is, moreover, an act of the will, for when we believe, we must have the will to believe; no one can force us to do so. In order that we may believe readily what is true, we must have God's grace, for true faith is a light poured down upon us from above, and no one can secure this light unaided. Ever since the fall, man

has been unable to find out for himself what he ought to believe, nor can he surrender himself to God and divine truth with all his heart and will. He needs to be taught by God what to believe, and to be drawn by God, so that he may gladly believe in Him; moreover, before faith is possible, God must give him His grace and thus inspire him with confidence and strength. The history of pagans, Christians and individuals, testifies to the truth of his statement. Pagans had either no faith at all or not the right faith. Some Christians cannot and will not believe, because by their own fault they have forfeited the grace necessary to enable them to do so; and no one can have the right faith unless God has first given him grace to believe.

Now let us ask: "What are we bound to believe?" We are bound to believe all that God revealed to men under the old dispensation through the Patriarchs, Moses and the Prophets, and under the new dispensation through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ. It matters not whether these revelations have been preserved in writing or only by word of mouth. We may safely believe them all to be true because God is the eternal Truth and Wisdom. He alone knows what is necessary and expedient for us, and He, being all holy, could not and would not reveal to us anything that was not absolutely true. Hence we do not act in any way contrary to reason, when we place unwavering confidence in His word. Is it unreasonable to be guided by One who is wiser than we are, and who is all Truth? Is it unreasonable for a child to trust his father or for a sick man to follow the advice of a skilful physician?

The Catholic Church teaches us whether God has given any revelation on particular points, and what He has said, and in what sense we are to understand Him. She alone can expound

God's word, and propound to us, as doctrines of faith, the truths recorded by Holy Scripture and by tradition. We can and ought to believe her, because Jesus Christ, the Son of God, promised her the assistance of the Holy Spirit, who would abide with her and guard her from all error until the consummation of the world.

You see, therefore, that to doubt what God has revealed and propounded for our belief through His Church, would be as great a sin as to question God's own Omniscience and Truth. Let us believe firmly all that He has revealed, even though we may not be able to understand all that we are taught by God and His holy Church. When it seems difficult to believe, let us have recourse to Him and pray earnestly for the gift of faith, and then neither our intellect nor our reason will prove a hindrance to our faith; on the contrary, we shall receive light from above which will remove many obscurities; only let us pray fervently, like the apostles, "Lord, increase and strengthen our faith." Amen.

2. The Qualities Our Faith Should Possess.

We discussed last Sunday what is meant by faith and what we are bound to believe. In order, however, that our faith may be both pleasing to God and beneficial to ourselves, we ought further to know what qualities it should possess, and I propose to take this question as my subject to-day. There are three qualities indispensable to the right kind of faith: it must be universal, firm and lively. (a) Our faith must be *universal, i. e.,* we must believe *all* the truths revealed by God and Jesus Christ, and believe them without exception, even though we may not understand them. Most people believe in one God, but some have no true faith in the Trinity, because it seems to them incomprehensible. Most Christians believe in Jesus Christ, but many refuse to believe that He was at once God

and Man. Most people consider the soul to be immortal, but many deny that we shall rise again with our bodies. Most people believe that some day we shall be rewared or punished for our actions in this life, but many cannot or will not accept the doctrine of eternal damnation. If we only believe part and not the whole of what God has revealed to us, directly or indirectly, our faith ceases to be universal, and is neither pleasing to God nor beneficial to ourselves, since we are cherishing a kind of distrust of Him. We must not doubt, and far less must we deny, anything revealed by God; we must believe it with a faith that, besides being universal, is also: (b) *firm,* incapable of being shaken by anything in the world. In Holy Scripture Abraham sets us a beautiful example of firm, unwavering faith, which never failed under any circumstances, so that he was known as the father of the faithful. When he was in Mesopotamia, God commanded him to leave his home, his friends and his father's house, and to go to a country that should be pointed out to him. Abraham believed and obeyed; he left behind all the things to which he had been accustomed from childhood, and set out, not knowing whither he was going—God had spoken, and his faith in God was strong. Eventually he came to the land which God had promised him as an inheritance, but for a long time he dwelt there as a stranger, not owning a foot of ground, but he did not become despondent; he knew that God had promised the land to him and his descendants, and believed that the promise would be fulfilled.

Abraham and his wife believed when God foretold that they should have a son, they trusted God's word and knew that with God all things are possible, and they were not disappointed. After showing his faith on various occasions, Abraham endured one supreme test that proved its strength. God ordered him to sacrifice

his only son, Isaac, and though it cost him a hard struggle, he obeyed, believing that God was able to raise even the dead to life. God had spoken, and forthwith he went to the place appointed for the sacrifice of his son, and would have slain the boy, had not God sent an angel to stay his hand. No greater proof of the firmness of his faith could possibly have been given. The Church records many glorious instances of unwavering faith. The holy apostles and martyrs endured all tortures imaginable and every form of death, rather than be false to their faith. They were persecuted most cruelly, racked, scourged, burnt with hot irons, flayed alive, sawed to pieces and cast to the wild beasts, but nothing could force them to abandon their faith in God.

(c) Finally, our faith must be *lively, i. e.,* it must influence our life and show itself in our works. Abraham's faith possessed this quality, for all that he did was the outcome of his faith. A man who has real faith in God denies himself, because his heart no longer desires the things of the flesh, but aims at doing what his faith perceives to be the Will of God. He puts aside all earthly pleasures in which he would otherwise take delight and he is filled with the love through which faith reveals itself, and which alone makes him just in God's sight: "for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom. ii, 13). If we, for instance, really believe that God's Providence orders everything, and that not a hair falls from a man's head without the knowledge and consent of his heavenly Father, let us manifest our faith in our actions, and, when troubles come upon us, let us not lose courage and confidence, but hope and believe that God will turn all to our advantage.

To sum up: If we are to please God and derive benefit to ourselves both in time and in eternity, our faith must be universal,

firm, and lively. Let us not tolerate the slightest doubt in matters of faith, but believe all God's revealed truths so firmly that nothing can make us waver; let us pay no attention to ridicule or persecution, but be ready, if need be, to suffer tortures and death rather than deny our faith. Let us resolve to show in all our words and works that we possess the true faith, following St. Paul's advice, and confessing our faith not only in our hearts but with our lips (Rom. x, 10), and being determined both to live and to die in this faith. Amen.

3. The Effects of Faith.

If we are to appreciate the value of faith we must study its effects upon the lives of believers.

(a) *Faith checks intellectual pride.* The human intellect refuses to accept as true anything that appears obscure or incomprehensible; but in order that we may be able to believe a thing, we need not necessarily comprehend it fully or perfectly understand its nature, but simply admit that it is a fact and is true. There is a great deal in the world of nature that we cannot fathom, but nevertheless believe. Why should we not accept the mysteries of religion in the same way? We are thoroughly convinced that from a seed planted in the earth may grow a herb, a bush or a tree, although we cannot tell precisely why this should be so. There are many things in the natural order which we believe without fully understanding, and we must likewise believe the mysteries of religion as they are revealed to us. When God speaks, it behooves the human intellect to be silent.

(b) *Faith promotes virtue* by awakening in Christians emotions and dispositions tending to virtuous actions. It was Abel's faith that made him offer a worthy sacrifice to God. Their faith caused Noe and Abraham to practise perfect obedience, and Job's faith

rendered him patient in affliction. The most barbarous tribes become civilized when they accept the true Faith, and we know that our own ancestors were savage and uncivilized before their conversion to Christianity.

(c) *Faith overcomes our passions and evil inclinations.* If we contemplate an infidel's manner of living, we shall see that he is completely governed by his passions. A man who has very little or no faith cannot moderate his anger, or repress his avaricious desires, or mortify his lusts, or subdue the cravings of the flesh. But it is otherwise with a man who has real faith, for he controls his passions and is not under their sway. He is not violent nor avaricious nor immoral.

(d) *Faith brings peace and consolation to our hearts.* A man who lives by faith has a lively trust in God's mercy and goodness, and this sustains him in all his troubles and afflictions, but one who believes nothing beyond the reach of his own reason is either totally indifferent to religion or has no faith at all. Without faith, hope is impossible, and one who is sure of nothing, is inevitably a prey to fears and devoid of all peace of mind. A true believer, on the contrary, can say with St. Paul: "I know whom I have believed, and I am certain that He is able to keep that which I have committed unto Him against that day" (I Tim. i, 12).

(e) *Faith fills us with hope of a joyful eternity.* When the good suffer, they can find comfort in their belief that all their sorrows and afflictions will have an end and be followed by unfailing happiness, for they remember how our Saviour said that the Son of Man must be lifted up, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish, but may have life everlasting (John iii, 15).

Such are the effects of faith! I pray that you may humble your intellect, imagination and pride, so that faith may reign in your

hearts, multiplying your virtues and subduing your passions and evil inclinations, so that at last you may enjoy true peace of mind and look forward to eternity with confidence and consolation. Amen.

4. The Duty of Publicly Confessing Our Faith.

When we know what faith is, what qualities it ought to have and what its effects should be, it behooves us to fulfil our obligations and confess openly that we are Catholics and that we value our religion very highly and intend to live in accordance with its doctrines. We must never deny our faith, but acknowledge it whenever either God's glory or our neighbor's welfare requires us to do so.

(1) We must never under any circumstances be false to our faith. We must never under any circumstances be false to our faith; hence we must never say anything contrary to the religion of Christ and the doctrines of the Catholic Church. Supposing some one were to declare that some of the Sacraments were not instituted by our Lord, or that the commandments of the Church were not very important, he would be denying the Catholic Faith.

(2) If we are questioned regarding our religion, we must never deny that we are Catholics. We may be tempted to do this when travelling, or when in society we meet non-Catholics, and are ashamed to acknowledge our faith.

(3) We must never pretend not to be Catholics. Many people yielding to human respect or to shyness, are afraid to make the sign of the Cross, to pray or to genuflect, lest they should be recognized as Catholics.

(4) We must never for any reason whatever conform to an other religion. Many Catholics, living in Protestant surroundings are tempted to do this, either because they fear derision, or for the sake of some worldly advantage. We must never deny

our faith, nor do or say anything that may be regarded as equivalent to a denial of it, not even though we may incur many hardships and undergo great losses in consequence. Both in the old and in the new Testament we read of many confessors who were true to their faith, and their example should encourage us. Eleazar preferred to be scourged to death rather than transgress the law, and the seven Machabees gave up their lives rather than worship idols. Our divine Lord fearlessly bore testimony to the truth of His doctrine before the Jewish Sanhedrin and Pontius Pilate, and finally allowed Himself to be crucified. Countless Saints have followed His example and laid down their lives rather than be false to their faith. Surely, when we remember these heroic martyrs we shall not dare to deny our faith, but shall confess it openly whenever God's honor or our neighbor's good requires us to do so, especially:

(1) When we are questioned by some lawful authority, with the intention either of finding out how many Catholics there are, or of knowing whether it has to deal with a Catholic or a non-Catholic. Even when the government is non-Catholic, we must not hesitate to say that we are Catholics.

(2) We must sometimes confess our faith in order to bring others to a knowledge of the truth, or to confirm them in it. This is most important at public religious ceremonies, for the sight of a devout Catholic has often induced Protestants to embrace the true Faith, and the devotion of a congregation makes lukewarm Catholics much more fervent in their prayers.

(3) We are bound to confess our faith whenever failure to do so may give scandal and cause others to be indifferent. The well-to-do ought particularly to take this to heart, and when they openly show their fervor they make others respect them more and not less.

It is the duty of kings and emperors to make public profession of their faith, and in this way they can make their influence widely felt for the good of the Church.

Let us resolve boldly and frequently to acknowledge ourselves to be Catholics; let us determine to say and do nothing contrary to the teaching of our Lord and His Church. If any one questions us as to our religion, let us say at once that we are Catholics and never act as if we were not; let us not conform to the practices of any other religion, nor renounce our faith and adopt another creed. Nothing could justify us in so doing, for we ought to be ready always and everywhere to proclaim ourselves members of the Holy Catholic Church. Hence we must not be ashamed to make the sign of the Cross, to genuflect, or to behave as Catholics are wont to do. Then we may cherish the consoling hope that God will acknowledge us as His children and reward us for our fearless confession of His beloved Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

5. God's Divine Revelation

All our faith depends upon God's revelation, since He alone has communicated to us the truths of religion, that we may lead good lives and attain to eternal happiness.

1. God revealed Himself at various times in various ways, as He thought best, and as men gradually became more and more capable of understanding His teaching. He treated the human race as a wise schoolmaster treats his pupils, and taught them a little at a time, not everything at once. God's revelation was progressive and adapted to the needs and faculties of men; yet what He revealed was always the same religion, only it was at different stages of development. At first it was only a seed, then it bore buds and blossoms, and finally it reached maturity and brought forth goodly fruit. The revelation was made in various ways, by a voice, a vision or a dream, but it was always of such a nature that there could be no doubt of its Divine origin.

2. *a.* The first revelation was made to Adam and Eve, when God gave them laws for the preservation of their happiness. After they yielded to the serpent's temptation, and disobeyed God's commandments through seeking to gratify their evil desires, they were expelled from Paradise and suffered all sorts of trials, so that, if He had not had mercy upon them, they would have perished miserably, but God consoled them with hopes of a happier future.

b. Subsequent revelations were made to the patriarchs Noe, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and, *c,* later on God chose Moses as His envoy to the people of Israel, and made known to him His will at various times and in various ways.

d. Afterwards God sent the prophets, men who were filled with His Spirit, and commissioned to reveal His truths to the people.

e. Lastly, after due preparation, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, in whom the Divine revelation reached its climax.

3. God has revealed to us certain truths regarding which our limited intelligence could discover very little, and He has made known to us the way of salvation, by teaching us our duties through His Commandments, by giving us the prospect of eternal glory, and by showing us all that is essential to our peace of mind, the discharge of our duty and the attainment of everlasting happiness.

Let us never weary of thanking and praising God for all His revelations, for without them we should know very little about our true destiny, and should have no hope at all for eternity. Let us do our best to acquire a better and fuller knowledge of God's revelations, and take pleasure in hearing sermons and reading books about them, and in proportion as we gain more knowledge of God and His holy will, let us increase our determination to conform to His law; let us be zealous in doing His will and keeping His Commandments, and then we shall at last reach the goal that He has set before us. Amen.

6. Holy Scripture

God's revelation has come down to us partly in writing, and partly by word of mouth; the written books form the Bible or Holy Scriptures, the verbal record is known as tradition. To-day I propose to speak of Holy Scripture as the first great source of our knowledge of God's revealed truths.

The Bible is a collection of books written under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and recognized by the Catholic Church as being the Word of God. It is divided into the Old and the New Testament; to the former belong the books of inspired writers contain-

ing the Divine truths revealed from the creation of the world to the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ. These books are 45 in number, and are of the utmost importance, as they give us information regarding the earliest history of the world and the human race, and also regarding the Divine dispensation, for they show us how men were gradually enlightened and prepared for the Saviour's advent. Moreover, the Old Testament contains much valuable teaching on the subject of virtue and morality, which teaching, being based upon reason, can never be out of date. Hence St. Paul was right when he said: "All scripture inspired of God is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice" (2 Tim. iii, 16).

The truths revealed by Jesus Christ personally and through the agency of His Apostles and disciples, have come down to us partly in writing and partly by tradition. The books containing the written record make up the New Testament, which consists of the four gospels, composed by St. Matthew, St. Mark, St. Luke and St. John respectively; the Acts of the Apostles by St. Luke, the Epistles, and the Apocalypse. In all there are 27 books, full of priceless truths, and most deeply interesting to Christians, since from them we learn the history of Christ and some of His Apostles, the most exalted doctrines of faith and morals, the means of salvation and the hope of eternal happiness. The whole of the Bible, *i. e.*, both the Old and the New Testaments, was written down under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and has been preserved free of all corruption. When we say that the authors of the Bible were inspired by the Holy Ghost, we mean that the Spirit of God impelled them to write, and suggested to them what they should record, reminding them of what they already knew and revealing to them what they did not know previouly; moreover the same

Spirit assisted them as they wrote, to prevent their making mistakes. It is not difficult for us to perceive this inspiration.

1. Any unprejudiced reader can tell from the simplicity of the style that the author's pen was guided by some higher power. 2. The contents of the sacred books afford still more convincing proof, as Holy Scripture undoubtedly contains the loftiest teaching on faith and morals—teaching that is not only excellent in itself, but perfectly adapted to the needs of mankind. 3. If we consider what sort of men wrote the books of the Bible, we shall feel certain that they possessed too little education to write as they did except under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 4. Our Lord Himself promised the Apostles that the Holy Ghost should teach them all truth; now they received the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, hence all their works were written under His inspiration and guidance.

The whole Bible, therefore, was inspired by God, and is most strictly His Word, so that it behooves us to regard it as a precious treasure, the purest source of all light and comfort, and the rule whereby to order all our thoughts and actions. Holy Scripture, as we possess it, is still the sacred book written down by holy men who were inspired by God. The text of the Old Testament is not corrupted, for manuscripts and translations of very various dates all agree on essential points, and it was practically impossible for it to be corrupted, since no book was ever preserved with so much care. Nor has the text of the New Testament been altered, either in the Apostolic age or at a later period, since the book was too widely known for falsification to be possible. Catholics could not tamper with the text, because they had such a deep respect for it, and heretics could not gain access to the early manuscripts which were jealously guarded by the Church. This is enough to

prove the authenticity and correctness of the New Testament, and we may safely believe that the whole Bible is an inspired book, and has been preserved free from all corruption; it is, therefore, our surest source of information regarding all the truths revealed by God. Let us never weary of thanking God for giving us such a treasure as Holy Scripture—let us make it our delight to read it and learn from it God's holy Will. We must, however, be careful to read only such Bibles as are sanctioned by the Church, and if any one is in doubt regarding the authenticity of his Bible, he should show it to a priest. It is not enough to read the Word of God with a childlike and humble mind, but it behooves us also to follow the light that it sheds upon our way, and to make it the guide of our path. Amen.

7. Tradition

Holy Scripture cannot possibly be the sole source of our knowledge of the truths revealed by God, for Christ commanded His Apostles to teach all nations; they were not commissioned to commit His doctrines to writing. Some of them have, it is true, left us written records, but they never attempted to write down everything that they had learned from our Lord. They wrote as occasion required, or as circumstances seemed to demand, but they often speak of Jesus as teaching in some town or village, without telling us exactly what He taught. For instance, St. Matthew says that He went about Galilee, teaching in the synagogues and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (iv, 23); but we do not know any details of this instruction. In their own writings the Apostles refer to oral tradition; for instance, St. Paul admonishes the Thessalonians in these words: "Brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have learned, whether by word or by our epistle"

(2 Thess. ii, 14); and to Timothy he says. "The things which thou hast heard of me by many witnesses, the same commend to faithful men, who shall be fit to teach others also" (2 Tim. ii, 2).

You see, therefore, that tradition is necessary, as well as Holy Scripture, if we are to know that Jesus Christ taught, and what steps He took to found His Church. Tradition dates from the Apostles, who were witnesses of our Lord's actions and heard His teachings, and they passed on their knowledge to the bishops who succeeded them, so that none of the sacred doctrines should be lost. The Fathers of the Church collected and wrote down most of the oral traditions, thus enriching the Church and supplying the faithful with the means of refuting all errors. The Church is the guardian and interpreter of all Divine truths, hence we must always abide by her decisions and follow her guidance in all that concerns doctrine, public worship and mode of life. In this way we shall imbibe the true spirit of Christianity, and not only obey the letter of its teaching, and we shall show forth in our lives the fruits of that spirit. Amen.

8. I Believe in God

The Apostles' Creed contains a brief summary of what we are bound to believe. It is a confession of faith, because in it are the chief doctrines which a Christian must believe in his heart and confess with his lips. It is Apostolic, because in substance it dates from the time of the Apostles, who drew up a formula of Christian doctrines which was used in the primitive Church. The creed does not occur in the Bible, but was handed down by oral tradition, and all adults, before being baptized, were required to say it aloud, thus pledging themselves to adhere to its tenets.

The Christian Confession of Faith consists of three parts, in the

first we declare our belief in God and in the marvels of the Creation; in the second in Jesus Christ and the mysteries of the atonement; and in the third in the Holy Ghost, the source of our sanctification. These three parts may be divided into twelve articles of faith.

The first article is: "I believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth." "I believe in God" means: "I believe that there is one supreme and perfect Being." "I believe in God the Father" means: "I believe that I came forth from God, and that my heavenly Father will preserve me and bring me to eternal happiness." "I believe in God the Father Almighy, Creator of heaven and earth" means; "I believe in God the Father, Who by His infinite power formed out of nothing the heavens and earth, and all that therein is, and still preserves and governs all that He created."

In order, however, to believe rightly in God, we must consider His attributes more closely. Let us begin to-day with the fact that God is a Spirit, the most perfect of all spirits.

1. God is a Spirit, *i. e.,* He has no body, no bodily form and no bodily needs. He is a pure Spirit, a Being possessed of understanding and will, but not of a body. The Israelites believed this, and they were strictly forbidden to make any image of God, and Christ Himself taught us that "God is a Spirit, and they that adore Him, must adore Him in spirit and in truth" (John iv, 24). "But," some one may say, "if God is a pure Spirit, why do we read in the Bible of His hands, eyes, ears and lips"? The eyes of God typify His Omniscience; His hands and arms denote His Almighty power, and when we read of God as inclining His ear to men, it means that He is ever ready to hear their prayers. When God is said to have lips and to speak, it means that He

reveals His holy Will, and when we read that His Throne is in Heaven, and that earth is His footstool, the reference is to His universal presence and dominion. Sometimes we are told in Holy Scripture that God appeared, but we must not suppose that He appeared in bodily form, only that He gave some token of His presence, as He did to Moses in the burning bush.

2. God is the most perfect Spirit; David knew this when he exclaimed: "Great is the Lord, and of His greatness there is no end" (Ps. cxliv, 3), and St. John in his first epistle writes (1, 5): "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness." God possesses perfect intelligence, and nothing is obscure to Him, and His Will, too, is most perfect, for it never changes or grows weak.

My Brethren, when we try to realize what it means to say that God is a Spirit, we are lost in admiration, and believers in every age have felt the same amazement. Because He is a Spirit, He is the most exalted Being, and He is such also in virtue of His infinite perfection; what then must be our astonishment when His Son bids us be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect. We can never attain to such perfection as God possesses, but we may become like Him, if we always do our best to develop our understanding and to ennoble our will. There is much consolation in the thought that God is a Spirit, and the most perfect of all spirits. We have not to deal with any ordinary being. Let us adore this glorious Spirit in spirit,—*i. e.*, earnestly and not thoughtlessly—and in truth—*i. e.*, really, and not merely outwardly—and then we shall derive the greatest benefit from thus adoring and imitating God as a Spirit. Amen.

9. God Is Everlasting

God being the most perfect Spirit is superior to and distinct from time. Everything that is not God has a beginning, and there was a period when neither the world nor anything in it existed. Such, however, is not the case with God; He existed before anything else, and everything has come into being through Him. He had no beginning and never came into existence, but has always existed and will never cease to exist. We human beings, who live in time, cannot form an adequate idea of God's eternity. To us He is Himself incomprehensible, and His eternal existence is also incomprehensible, but it is nevertheless true, and Divine revelation makes it impossible for us to doubt it. The Hebrew name for God, Jahve, denotes: "He who is and who was and who is to come" (Exod. iii, 14). Eliu consoled Job and said: "God is great, exceeding our knowledge: the number of His years is inestimable" (*i. e.*, because He is eternal) (Job xxxvi, 26). David expressed his sense of God's eternity, when he exclaimed: "Lord, Thou hast been our refuge from generation to generation. Before the mountains were made, or the earth and the world was formed, from eternity and to eternity Thou art God" (Ps. lxxxix, 1, 2). And again: "Thy years are unto generation and generation; in the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundedst the earth, and the heavens are the works of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou remainest; and all of them shall grow old like a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed; but Thou art always the self-same, and Thy years shall not fail" (Ps. ci, 25-28). The prophet Isaias comforted the captives in Babylon by saying: "Knowest thou not or hast thou not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God who hath created the ends of the earth; He

shall not faint, nor labor, neither is there any searching out of His wisdom" (Is. xl, 28). Even King Darius ordered reverence to be paid to Daniel's God throughout the whole kingdom, "for He is the living and eternal God forever, and His Kingdom shall not be destroyed, and His power shall be forever" (Dan. vi, 26).

There is no lack of evidence in the Old Testament to show that men believed God to be eternal, and it is corroborated by statements in the New Testament. Our Lord speaks of everlasting punishments and rewards (Matt. xxv, 46); hence God, who assigns them must Himself be everlasting. St. Peter writes: "The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory in Christ Jesus, will Himself perfect you. . . . To Him be glory and empire for ever and ever" (1 Peter v, 10, 11). This testimoney, derived from both the Old and the New Testament, is enough to prove that we may certainly trust in God's eternity. Nothing else can inspire us with such confidence, since riches, power and earthly friends all pass away. Sometimes when we feel forsaken by all men, and anxious about the future, we may find great comfort in the thought that God is eternal, and will never abandon us. The remembrance of this fact will sustain us in all our troubles and fill us with hope for the future, since we are destined to spend an eternity of happiness with our Heavenly Father. Our present life is short and soon comes to an end, but it is only the prelude to life everlasting.

My Brethren, let us place all our confidence in God, who never changes, but lives on for ever. He is at all times our surest refuge, and as He is eternal, and we too are destined for everlasting life, let us strive so to live here on earth that He may reward us here after with unfailing bliss. Amen.

10. God Is Unchanging

God is the most perfect Spirit, and therefore He possesses all imaginable perfections, and He possesses them for all eternity without the slightest change or variation. He is unchangeable both in His nature and His decrees.

1. God is unchanging in His nature; what He now is, He has been from all eternity and will be forever. The world and all that it contains are liable to change and since the Creation the world has changed again and again; plants, animals and men are subject to variation, and even the same individual assumes a different appearance at various stages of existence. But it is not so with God, who is always the same; His omnipotence, wisdom and goodness never vary, and never admit of increase or decrease; if they could increase, He would not previously have been absolutely perfect; if they could decrease, He would cease to be the most perfect Being, viz., God. Even in the earliest times men knew that God could not change. He said to Moses: "I am who am" (Exod., iii, 14), that is to say, eternal and unchanging. David extolled God's permanence in the 101st Psalm (26-28), where he says: "In the beginning, O Lord, Thou foundedst the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy Hands; they shall perish, but Thou remainest, and all of them shall grow old like a garment, and as a vesture Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed, but Thou art always the selfsame, and Thy years shall not fail." The same belief in God's unchangeableness occurs in the New Testament. St. James writes: "Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no change, nor shadow of alteration."

2. God is no less unchanging in His decrees than in His nature. We often change our minds, and what we approve and like at one moment, at another we condemn and dislike. The reasons why we act thus are as a rule want of knowledge and bodily needs or cravings. Occasionally we resolve to do some piece of work, and do not doubt our ability to accomplish it, but circumstances arise which alter our whole line of action. David was at one time Saul's dearest friend and companion, but afterwards Saul grew jealous of David's popularity, and his love turned to hatred.

With God no such change is possible, as His omniscience prevents Him from ever making mistakes; and His sanctity and justice avert all falsehood and wrong. Hence David says: "The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever; the thoughts of His Heart to all generations" (Ps., xxxii, 11). Isaias represents God as saying to the Israelites: "The mountains shall be moved and the hills shall tremble, but My mercy shall not depart from thee, and the covenant of My peace shall not be moved, said the Lord that hath mercy on thee" (Is., liv, 10). Solomon too writes: "There are many thoughts in the heart of a man, but the will of the Lord shall stand firm" (Prov., xix, 21). In the book of Ecclesiasticus we read (xlii, 21, 22): "The Lord hath beautified the glorious works of His wisdom, and He is from eternity to eternity, and to Him nothing may be added, nor can He be diminished, and He hath no need of any counsellor." These quotations will suffice to show that God can never change; and what results from this fact? Since He is unchangeable in Himself, we may most confidently hope to obtain from Him all that is necessary for our salvation; and since He is unchangeable in His decrees, we may be sure that He will do all that He has promised for our welfare. The aim of all our endeavors is not thus the fickle, unstable world, but the great unchanging

God; therefore let us always trust Him rather than men, who are often inconstant. Let us imitate Him by trying to press forward steadily on the path of virtue, and never to waver in our purpose. Let us not be like reeds, blown this way and that by the wind, but be steadfast in carrying out our good resolutions. We should be ready to change only if we have done wrong, in order that we may still hope to dwell in God's presence for ever. Amen.

II. God Is Present Everywhere

As an infinitely perfect Being, God is unfathomable, immeasurable, no limits can be assigned to His presence, and therefore He is present everywhere throughout the whole universe. We cannot understand how this can be, but nevertheless it is an undeniable truth. As the Creator of the world God must be present with everything in order to preserve it. If our reason were not enough to convince us of this fact, we should know it from Divine revelation. Abraham was aware that God could be found in every place; David says: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy Face? If I ascend into Heaven, Thou art there; if I descend into hell, Thou art present. If I take my wings early in the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there also shall Thy Hand lead me, and Thy right Hand shall hold me" (Ps., cxxxviii, 7-11). At the dedication of the Temple Solomon uttered a prayer that expresses his firm belief in God's presence everywhere (2 Paral., vi). Jeremias, too, represents God as saying to the false prophets: "Am I, think ye, a God at hand, and not a God afar off? Shall a man be hid in secret places, and I not see him? Do I not fill the Heaven and the earth?" (Jer., xxiii, 23, 24). There can be no doubt that the writers of the Old Testament knew that God was present in every place, and their testi-

mony would suffice to justify our belief, had God not revealed the same truth in the New Testament also. Our Lord Himself taught it to the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well, when He said: "The hour cometh when you shall neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, adore the Father" (John iv, 21). Both temples were to be destroyed, but nevertheless God could be worshipped elsewhere, because there is no place where He is not present. St. Paul taught the same doctrine to the Athenians, when he told them that God was not far from every one of us, since in Him we live and move and are (Acts, xvii, 27, 28). St. Stephen, too, declared before the Council of the Jews that "the Most High dwelleth not in houses made by hand," for His throne was in Heaven and the earth His footstool (Acts, vii, 48, 49). Not only is there abundant evidence in support of this doctrine, but it contains much consolation for us all. We can lift up our hearts to God in our homes, in the fields, in society and in solitude just as well as at church. The whole world is His temple, and there is no spot, however remote, where we can sin unobserved. On the other hand we are justified in expecting an abundant reward for all our good works, even though they may be done in secret. If ever we are lonely and far from home, we may remember that God is everywhere, ready to help us. We ought to shrink from neither danger nor death, since, whether we live or die, we are in God's hands. Let us resolve never to allow our worldly interests to make us lose sight of God, but remind ourselves continually of His presence by saying: "Thou, God, seest me," or "Help me, O God." If we have strayed from Him, let us not delay to return and repent of our sins. Let us carefully avoid all that might withdraw us from His presence, especially let us shun all evil, since whoever transgresses God's commandments is turning away from Him. Finally,

let us beseech Him never to forsake us, but to remain with us forever. Amen.

12. God Knows Everything

Because God is everywhere, He hears and sees everything, and knows all that we think and do and say; past, present and future all alike come within the scope of His knowledge. "He that planted the ear, shall He not hear? or He that formed the eye, doth He not consider? . . . The Lord knoweth the thoughts of men" (Ps., xciii, 9, 11). An artist must understand his works, and God, the Creator and Preserver of all things, must have a most thorough knowledge of all that He has created. Nothing is unknown to Him; nothing can ever be hidden from Him. He sees all that there is in Heaven, on earth and under the earth, "for He beholdeth the ends of the world, and looketh on all things that are under Heaven" (Job, xxviii, 24.) "All the works of men are as the sun in the sight of God, and His eyes are continually upon their ways" (Ecclus., xvii, 16). "Do I not fill Heaven and earth, said the Lord?" (Jerem., xxiii, 24). God knows all that is past, present and future, "He seeth from eternity to eternity, and there is nothing wonderful before Him" (Ecclus., xxxix, 25). "He showed what should come to pass for ever, and secret things before they came" (*ibid.*, xlviii, 28). Things great and small are both perceived by Him, He knows when a sparrow falls to the ground, and the very hairs of your head are all numbered (Matt., x, 29, 30). All our good and evil actions lie open before Him, "for His eyes are upon the ways of men, and He considereth all their steps. There is no darkness and there is no shadow of death, where they may be hid who work iniquity" (Job xxxiv, 21, 22). "He seeth all men without ceasing. . . . He knoweth all the work of

man" (Ecclus., xv, 19, 20). "Every man . . . that saith: "Who seeth me? Darkness compasseth me about and the walls cover me, and no man seeth me; whom do I fear? The Most High will not remember my sins? He understandeth not that His eye seeth all things . . . and he knoweth not that the eyes of the Lord are far brighter than the sun, beholding round about all the ways of men" (Ecclus., xxiii, 25-28). "The eyes of the Lord in every place behold the good and the evil" (Prov., xv, 3). God is aware of all our thoughts, intentions, desires and inclinations. Job was so thoroughly convinced of this truth that he exclaimed: "O Lord, I know that Thou canst do all things, and no thought is hid from Thee" (xlii, 2). And David in the 138th Psalm sings: "Lord, Thou hast proved me and known me; Thou hast known my sitting down and my rising up. Thou hast understood my thoughts afar off, my path and my line Thou hast searched out, and Thou hast foreseen all my ways. . . . Behold, O Lord, Thou hast known all things, the last and those of old. . . . Thy knowledge is become wonderful to me; it is high, and I cannot reach to it. God perceives all the good and bad things that can befall us, so that Christ could say: "Your Father knoweth what is needful for you, before you ask Him" (Matt., vi, 8). His knowledge is not partial, nor does it gradually increase, but it is full, perfect and absolutely certain.

Faith in God's knowledge is a source of great consolation to those in sorrow, especially if they are innocent. It enabled the holy martyrs to bear terrible tortures cheerfully.

God knows everything! What an encouragement to the righteous to persevere in good works, looking for no earthly reward! God knows everything! Is not this enough to deter us from every wicked thought, word and action? God knows everything! Does

not this fact dispose a sinner to do penance? God in His mercy deigns to hear the faintest cry for pardon, as He listened to the publican in the Temple at Jerusalem, and sent him home justified and at peace.

God knows everything—the remembrance of His knowledge will strengthen us in our conflict with evil. Joseph and Susanna both relied upon God when their honor and even their life were threatened.

My Brethren, let us never forget that God knows everything—and continually call this fact to mind, both in prosperity and adversity, whether we are doing right or wrong, whether we are resisting evil or inclined to yield to it, for all things are naked and open to His eyes" (Hebr., iv, 13). Amen.

13. God Is Almighty

God, being the most perfect Spirit, must be able to accomplish whatever He will, that is to say, He is almighty, and nothing can resist His will. A man may be strong and powerful, but he is not almighty, and is forced at almost every step to realize his limitations. But it is otherwise with God, who has but to will a thing, and it is accomplished. If He were not almighty, it would be possible to increase or modify His power, and He would not be the most perfect Being, such as God must inevitably be. At the Creation His omnipotence was first revealed. To create the stars, the oceans and the animal and vegetable worlds all out of nothing required a power so vast as to be beyond the reach of any but an omnipotent God. A prince may possess wide dominions and rule over many people, but it is impossible to compare him with God, the Creator of heaven and earth. The prophet Isaias gives a beautiful description of God's infinite power, saying: "Who hath measured

the waters in the hollow of His Hand, and weighed the heavens with His palm? Who hath poised with three fingers the bulk of the earth, and weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance? . . . All nations are before Him as if they had no being at all. . . . It is He that sitteth upon the globe of the earth . . . that stretched out the heavens as nothing, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. . . . He hath made the judges of the earth as vanity . . . suddenly He hath blown upon them and they are withered, and a whirlwind shall take them away as stubble" (Is., xl, 12-24).

God displayed His almighty power very clearly at the time of the deluge, when all living things perished in the waters; He displayed it again in all the wonders wrought to enable the Israelites to quit Egypt, and during their years of wandering in the desert. There are many passages in the Bible in which reference is made to God's infinite power. God Himself said to Abraham: "I am the Almighty God, walk before me and be perfect" (Gen., xvii, 1). David bore witness to it before the whole people, when he prayed, saying: "Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory, and to Thee is praise, for all that is in Heaven, and in earth is Thine; Thine is the Kingdom, O Lord, and Thou art above all princes. . . . Thou hast dominion over all; in Thy Hand is power and might, in Thy Hand is greatness and the empire of all things" (Paral., xxix, 11, 12). Judith exclaimed: "O Adonai Lord, great art Thou, and glorious in Thy power, and no one can overcome Thee. Let all Thy creatures serve Thee, because Thou hast spoken, and they were made; Thou didst send forth Thy Spirit, and they were created, and there is no one that can resist Thy voice" (Jud., xvi, 16, 17). King Solomon said: "Thou, O Lord, hast power of life and death, and leadest down to the gates of death, and bringest

back again . . . it is impossible to escape Thy Hand" (Wisdom, xvi, 13, 15). In the book of Daniel, too, we read (iv, 32): "All the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing before God, for He doth according to His will, as well with the powers of Heaven as among the inhabitants of the earth, and there is none that can resist His Hand."

These quotations show plainly enough that we cannot doubt God's omnipotence, and we may derive great comfort from the assurance that in all our troubles we ought to trust God, since it is easy for Him to relieve and help us. The consideration of His infinite power should make us humble and insignificant in our own sight. If we are too weak to do good and to avoid evil, we must ask Almighty God to give us strength, and if we realize how ready He is to assist us, we shall exclaim, as our Lady did, with grateful hearts: "He that is mighty hath done great things to me" (Luke, i, 49).

Therefore, let us firmly believe that God is all-powerful; we have indeed abundant evidence that He is so; let us trust Him in all that befalls us, and call upon Him when dangers beset us either in body or in soul, and thank Him for the numberless benefits that we receive because He is so infinitely great and good. Amen.

14. God is All-Wise.

Since in all that He ordains God desires nothing but good, and employs infallible means for accomplishing what He wills, He is all-wise. We find unmistakable traces of His wisdom in the creation, for every creature reflects it. For instance;—if the sun shone incessantly, or were nearer the earth, animal and vegetable life would be impossible. If there were no clouds, no rain would fall to refresh and fertilize the earth. If there were no pure air and water, no living creature could exist. If particular animals were not found in each part of the world, it would be difficult for man to obtain food. If men were not endowed with intellectual faculties, it would be hardly possible for them to thrive. God's infinite wisdom is apparent in the whole order of nature, and not merely in individual cases. We all behold with admiration the regular courses of the heavenly bodies, and the succession of seasons, we see how everything in nature serves some particular purpose, and that all things have their proper place. Inorganic substances are the food of the vegetable kingdom, which in its turn sustains life in animals and man. What a masterpiece of Divine wisdom is man! How marvellous is the connection between his soul and body! How wonderfully do all his members conduce to his welfare as a whole! Moreover, God's wisdom appears in the destiny of man, who was created that he might serve God and enjoy eternal happiness. Could there be a more glorious destiny than this? Consider, too, how well the means are adapted to its fulfilment; we have reason and conscience, free will and the Sacraments,—all designed to help us on our way.

Well might St. Paul exclaim: "O the depth of the riches of the

wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom., xi, 32). There are, it is true, in nature many things that seem to be useless or even harmful; occasionally storms and other misfortunes occur, and there are people whose lives are a succession of mishaps and failures; yet we must believe that all takes place in accordance with God's will, and for the best and wisest purpose. We cannot argue with Him; our intellect is far too limited and our powers too restricted. Sometimes, however, we can perceive the reason why He acts as He does; for instance, He made the Israelites wander for forty years in the desert in order that they might recognize Him as their God, and learn upon what their future happiness depended. Joseph was hated by his brethren and sold into Egypt, in order that he might afterwards save his people from starvation.

Our divine Lord Himself lived a life of poverty and died a death of shame and agony, that He might reconcile God and man, and save the human race from an eternity of woe.

Sometimes things happen which seem at first sight to be useless and injurious, but prove afterwards highly beneficial. Wise men have never doubted God's infinite wisdom. Solomon says that it "reacheth from end to end mightily, and ordereth all things sweetly" (Wisdom, viii, 1). "With Thee, O Lord, is wisdom, which knoweth Thy works, which then also was present when Thou madest the world, and knew what was agreeable to Thy eyes" (*ibid.* ix, 9). The wise Sirach writes: "The Lord knoweth all knowledge, and hath beheld the signs of the world; He declareth the things that are past, and the things that are to come, and revealeth the traces of hidden things . . . He hath beatified the glorious works of His wisdom" (Ecclus., xlii, 19, 21). With similar rapture St. Paul exclaimed: "O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of

God! How incomprehensible are His judgments, and how unsearchable His ways!" (Rom., xi, 33). We often have occasion to marvel at the ways in which God's infinite wisdom is revealed to us.

As we were designed to be like God, and so to be saved, it behooves us to seek wisdom, and in all our words and works to have the pure intention of promoting His honor, our own welfare and that of our neighbor, choosing and applying always the best means of accomplishing our end. Let us follow St. Bernard's advice: "If a man will attain unto wisdom, let him diligently exercise himself in good works, for it is written: If thou desirest wisdom, my son, keep the Commandments, and God will bestow it upon thee." Amen.

15. God is Holy.

Holiness is the attribute especially of God's will, since He himself is the author of the moral law, and consequently can approve that only which is in perfect agreement with this law, whilst He must abhor all that is opposed to it. Hence God requires of men unconditional obedience to the moral law. There are many passages in Holy Scripture containing plain allusions to His sanctity. For instance, in Leviticus xl, 44, God says: "I am the Lord your God; be holy because I am holy." David writes: "Thou art not a God that willest iniquity . . . the unjust shall not abide before Thy eyes" (Ps., v, 5, 6). Isaias tells us (vi, 3) that the angels in Heaven cry: "Holy, holy, holy, the Lord God of hosts; all the earth is full of His glory." In his first epistle (i, 5) St. John says: "God is light, and in Him there is no darkness, *i. e.*, He is holy and spotless, a most pure spirit.

When we call God holy, we mean that He loves all that is good, and hates all that is wicked. We see this in the case of Cain and

Abel; God loved them both as long as they were good and innocent, but after Cain through envy had slain his brother, God punished him.

Since God is holy He must wish to hinder evil and encourage virtue, and consequently He has given us reason, that we may be able to distinguish between right and wrong, and a conscience that urges us to do good and avoid evil. The ten Commandments and the Gospel were given us by God for the same purpose, and they confirm the fact of His sanctity.

St. Peter admonishes us all to be holy (1 Peter, i, 15, 16) and writes: "According to Him that hath called you, who is holy, be you also in all manner of conversation holy, because it is written: "You shall be holy for I am holy." Hence our will ought always and under all circumstances to agree with the moral law; we must do and desire nothing but what is in accordance with God's will. We must hate and detest sin, as the greatest of evils, and love virtue, and if ever we incur the guilt of sin, we must not delay to cleanse ourselves from it.

When we perceive goodness in others, we should rejoice, but we should grieve over and detest wickedness, and never regard it with indifference. It behooves us to do our best to diminish the evil and increase the goodness in the world and also try to induce others to do the same. Let us take all this well to heart, and strive to promote sanctity in ourselves and others, so that at last we may be deemed worthy to approach God, the all-holy, and to dwell with Him for ever. Amen.

16. God is Just.

Since God is holy, He must be just, and assign rewards and punishments in accordance with men's merits. He is just, too, in distributing His gifts, for He bestows upon each individual enough

to enable him to attain his final end. He does not indeed bestow His favors equally upon all, for one man often receives more than another. God is just in His demands upon us, not asking of us more than we can accomplish, nor requiring us to bear a burden beyond our strength. He is just in His judgments, never being deceived by appearances or misled, but judging all according to the truth. Finally, He is just in assigning rewards and punishments, being always ready to recognize goodness and chastise evil without respect of persons.

God's justice is manifest in this world, where He allows the righteous to enjoy peace of mind, and makes the wicked suffer fear and anxiety. His justice was felt by Adam and Eve, Noe, and the people of Israel.

As long as Adam and Eve obeyed God, they were happy and contented, but as soon as they transgressed His commandments, they became miserable, and were driven out of Paradise and forced to lead a life of labor.

Because Noe and his family served God zealously and refrained from sin, they were preserved from the deluge, whereas their contemporaries, who cared nothing about God and lived in wickedness, were destroyed. As long as the people of Israel faithfully obeyed God's commands, they prospered; but when they turned away from Him, many punishments were inflicted upon them.

Even in our own time we can see often how just God is in assigning rewards and punishments; *e. g.*, a temperate man enjoys good health, whilst a drunkard suffers from many ailments: An industrious person makes money, but a lazy one loses it; parents, who bring up their children carefully, derive much happiness from them, but those who neglect their duty are often overwhelmed with shame and sorrow; servants who are honest and faithful, are loved and re-

spected, but those who are idle and dishonest are disliked and dismissed.

Sometimes, however, the wicked prosper, whilst the good fare badly. In the Gospel we read of Dives, who was unmerciful to the poor, and yet lived in luxury, whereas Lazarus, who feared God, lived in poverty and misery. But such cases as this ought not to mislead us; a time will come when God in His justice will balance all accounts and repay both the good and the bad according to their deserts. Our Lord taught us that this would be the case in the sequel to the story of Dives and Lazarus. After death the former suffered the torments of hell, but the latter was carried to Abraham's bosom, *i. e.*, he rested with the elect in Limbo until he was admitted to Heaven at our Lord's ascension.

Our faith in God's justice is based on many passages in Holy Scripture. St. Paul impressed upon the Corinthians the fact that God would eventually reward them, and added: "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast and unmovable; always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not vain in the Lord" (1 Cor., xv, 58), who "will render to every man according to his works" (Rom., ii, 6); "for God is not unjust, that He should forget your work and the love which you have shown in His name" (Hebr., vi, 10). St. Matthew records one of our Lord's parables, in which He speaks of God, the householder, paying the laborers in His vineyard (chap. 20); and in another place we read how the King will say to those on His right hand, who have been kind and charitable to the poor and needy: "Come, ye blessed, possess the kingdom" (Matt., xxv, 34, 40). The whole story of Tobias shows as how God rewarded him for his charity towards others (Tob., xii, 6, 22), and St. Paul tells us that all things work together unto good to them that love God. (Rom., viii, 28).

But God's justice is shown in punishments as well as in rewards. St. Paul, in writing to the Romans, says that tribulation and anguish will come upon those who obey not the truth, but give credit to iniquity, wrath and indignation (Rom., ii, 8, 9); and our Lord tells us that at the last day the King will say to those on His left hand: "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire" (Matt., xxv, 41).

The knowledge that God is just in assigning both rewards and punishments should be a source of infinite consolation to us, especially when we seem to fail in spite of all our efforts to do right. But at the same time the thought of chastisement should fill us with wholesome fear, and deter us at least from falling into grievous sin. Moreover, as God is just to all men, so ought we to be just and fair in our judgments and actions, remembering always that our Lord said; "The wicked shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting" (Matt., xxv, 46); if we bear this warning in mind, we shall surely do our best to be just towards all men. Amen.

17. God is Good.

1. God's power and wisdom were plainly revealed at the Creation, and His infinite goodness is no less recognizable, for all nature proclaims it. All creatures bear witness to His goodness, but men do so in a peculiar degree, for to us God gives life, health, senses and intelligence; He supplies us with food, shelter and clothing, and does not furnish us with bare necessaries only but bestows upon us much that conduces to our ease and enjoyment. What we receive from our parents and friends comes originally from God, since they had it from Him. Moreover, He is under no obligation or constraint to give us anything, since He has no need of us; all his gifts are unmerited by us and the outcome of His free goodness.

2. God's law displays His infinite goodness, for its sole aim is to make us serve and worship Him in the right may, that we may be happy both in time and in eternity. This law is inscribed by God on every human heart, and made known also through Moses, the prophets, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. We read much in Holy Scripture regarding the goodness of God. David exclaims: "All expect of Thee, O Lord, that Thou give them food in season" (Ps. ciii, 27), "for Thou art sweet and mild, and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Thee" (Ps. lxxxv, 5). Solomon says: "Thou lovest all things that are . . . and sparest all" (Wisd., xi, 25, 27). Isaias declares that God cannot forget us, even though a mother may forget her own child (xlix, 15). St. James tells us that every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights (i, 17); and our Lord spoke of God as the Father of mankind, whilst St. John calls Him charity itself. (Matt., vii, 2; 1 John, iv, 16).

4. The most conclusive proof of God's goodness, however, is the fact that we have been redeemed by His only begotten Son, with whom all that is great and good was given to us.

When we consider all these things, we cannot help complying with David's exhortation: "Give praise to the Lord, for He is good, and His mercy endureth for ever" (Ps., cxvii, 1).

We owe Him the deepest gratitude and the most ardent love. Who can refuse to love a benefactor? Only an unnatural monster could withhold gratitude from God, who does us so much good. Besides feeling gratitude and love, however, it behooves us to make a good use of all God's benefits, and, as St. Paul says, to renounce ungodliness and wordly lusts, and lead just, moral and godfearing lives. Let us never question God's goodness, even if troubles assail

us, but say, like holy Job: "If we have received good things at the hand of God, why should we not receive evil?" (ii, 10). Finally "let us love God, because God hath first loved us" (1 John, iv, 19).

18. God is Merciful

When we speak of God's mercy, we mean that perfection which is touched by the sight of human misery and moved to relieve it and to sustain our frailty. When we say that God is merciful to a sinner, we mean that He treats him with fatherly forbearance, forgetting the insult dealt Him, and taking back the transgressor into favor, if only he repents of his wrong-doing and has a firm purpose of amendment. Faith in God's mercy affords much consolation to us all, and is confirmed by many clear statements in Holy Scripture. Moses addressed God on Mount Sinai as "the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, patient and of much compassion and true, who keepest mercy unto thousands; who takest away iniquity, wickedness and sin; who renderest the iniquity of the fathers to the children, unto the third and fourth generation" (Exod., xxxiv, 6, 7). David speaks of the Lord as "compassionate and merciful; long-suffering and plenteous in mercy" (Ps., cii, 8), and as "sweet to all; His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps., cxliv, 9). Isaias bids "the wicked forsake his way, and the unjust man his thoughts, and return to the Lord, and He will have mercy on him, and to our God, for He is bountiful to forgive" (Is., lv, 7). God spoke through the Prophet Ezechiel, saying: "As I live, I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech., xxxiii, 11); and through the Prophet Joel He said: "Be converted to Me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping, and in mourning, and rend your hearts and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God; for He is gracious and merciful, patient and rich in mercy" (Joel, ii, 12, 13). In the Book of Wisdom we read (xi, 24): "Thou hast mercy

upon all, because Thou canst do all things, and overlookest the sins of men for the sake of repentance." Finally, Sirach, the wise man, says: "God is patient in men and poureth forth His mercy upon them. He hath seen the presumption of their heart that it is wicked, and hath known their end that it is evil. Therefore hath He filled up His mercy in their favor, and hath shewn them the way of justice. The compassion of man is toward his neighbor, but the mercy of God is toward all flesh" (Ecclus., xviii, 9-12). We may remember also how God forgave the Ninivites because they did penance, and also the Israelites, as often as they repented. In the New Testament there are several parables showing how great is God's mercy. For instance in that of the Prodigal Son (Luke, xv, 11-32) we see how the father gladly forgave his son, simply because he came home penitent. In the parable of the lost sheep and the lost groat we perceive with what joy those who have gone astray are welcomed back (Luke, xv, 1-10); and in the parable of the King, we notice his readiness to remit his servant's debt (Matt., xviii, 23-27). Do not all these parables teach us to realize God's mercy? Jesus Christ tells us that there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner doing penance, more than over ninety-nine just persons. This is because converted sinners are as a rule more zealous in their service of God, and love Him better.

The authority, conferred by our Lord upon His Apostles, to forgive sins, is another proof of God's mercy (John, xx, 23). Christ Himself was infinitely merciful towards sinners; and when the Pharisees found fault with Him on this account, He said: "They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill. . . . I am not come to call the just, but sinners" (Matt., ix, 12, 13). He displayed His mercy towards the woman taken in

adultery, Zacheus, Mary Magdalene, St. Peter and St. Paul, and the dying thief on the cross. We may well exclaim with the Prophet Ezechiel: "God desireth not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezech., xxxiii, 11). These reflections should certainly awaken in us unbounded confidence in God's goodness, deep gratitude, true repentance and serious purpose of amendment.

1. When two friends are devoted to each other, and do their best to serve and help each other, they feel such mutual confidence that they think themselves justified in asking for assistance whenever it is required, and assume that it will not be withheld. If friendship begets such confidence even in our fellow-mortals, with how much more reason should a sinner trust God's mercy! No truer friendship is possible than that which God shows to transgressors, nor is any human friend able to render such unfailing help and to stand so close in time of need. Moreover, our friendships are often very shortlived, and those who most loudly protest their affection are frequently influenced by motives of self-interest. But we may safely rely upon God, our truest Friend, and have recourse to Him in all our troubles, telling Him our sorrows and asking His help and pardon. He never refuses to forgive us, and His love is absolutely disinterested; His great desire is to do us good, and He asks for nothing in return except that we should forsake sin.

2. Where we are unable to make any return for benefits received, our natural sense of justice impels us to cherish feelings of gratitude, and we owe God a far greater debt of gratitude than we can owe to any man. Through sin we had lost all claim to eternal happiness and condemned ourselves to endless misery, but God in

His goodness, without any merit on our part, allows us to hope that we shall still be numbered among His children. When we think of His mercy, we cannot fail to be overwhelmed with thankfulness, and we exclaim with St. Augustine: "Thou didst call me, and I fled from Thy voice, but the further I sought to stray from Thee, the more tender was Thy summons. By loving inspirations Thou didst draw me to Thyself, but I despised them; by secret warnings Thou didst set me on my guard against the dangers surrounding me on all sides, and didst show me the abyss on the verge whereof I stood, but I heeded not Thy words. I forgot Thee, but Thou didst not forget me. How great a debt of gratitude I owe Thee! How can I ever be worthy of all Thy mercy towards me, a wretched, miserable sinner? I have nothing to give Thee; therefore for all eternity will I extol Thy merciful goodness."

3. A sinner, who considers how mercifully God deals with him, must have a heart of stone if he feels no gratitude. Despite all the insults that he has offered to his Creator, God calls upon him to be converted, and encourages him to turn to Him. Thus God takes the first step towards reconciliation, although He has suffered wrong. No man would treat an enemy with such generosity, although a desire to avoid chastisement might impel him to seek reconciliation. God, however, does more than this, for He demands no adequate satisfaction of the sinner (who would indeed be unable to make it), and only requires him to be sorry for his past sins, and for having behaved so badly to his Benefactor. It cannot surely be difficult for a sinner to awaken within his heart feelings of sorrow and true repentance; even a sense of what is to his own advantage would suggest such sentiments, and if he does not regret having offended God, his good and loving Father, the thought of eternal punishment must induce him to do penance. Therefore,

my Brethren, let us frequently make acts of sorrow for sin, that God's mercy may not be offered us in vain.

4. Sorrow for sin is, however, beneficial to us only if we have a firm purpose of amendment. No reconciliation is possible when the wrong-doer does not resolve to avoid committing the same sin in the future, for the very object of reconciliation is to restore the previous friendly relation, and there can be no true friendship between two persons unless both are determined to refrain from injuring each other. The very idea of reconciliation requires a firm resolution to avoid giving offense in future, and a sinner must be still more bound to resolve most seriously never again to fall into the same sin against God, to whom all sin is an abomination. Let us renew our confidence and gratitude, and thank God for His infinite mercy, not merely regretting our former sins but making up our minds never again throughout our whole lives to commit any grievous sin against Him. Amen.

19. God is Long-Suffering

We know that God is infinitely good and kind, and therefore He does not always punish a sinner immediately, but gives him opportunity to do penance and save his soul from destruction. This consideration for sinners is the attribute to which we refer when we say that God is long-suffering. We have many instances of it both in ancient and in modern history.

In the time before Noe there was very general moral corruption, and God might well have destroyed the whole human race without warning, but instead of doing so, He gave them opportunity for repentance, and did not punish them for one hundred and twenty years. The people of Ninive were most vicious, but instead of annihilating them, God sent the Prophet Jonas to convert them,

that they might not perish. He showed infinite patience in His dealings with the Israelites, who frequently murmured and rebelled against Him. They even fell into idolatry and worshipped graven images, but still God desired to save them, and from time to time sent prophets to admonish them, and finally Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, came to instruct them.

How many people have experienced God's patience and forbearance! David, though he was guilty of murder, robbery and adultery; Manasses, though he favored idolatry, desecrated the Temple at Jerusalem, meddled with witchcraft and sacrificed his own son to Moloch; Peter, who denied his Lord and Master; and Paul, who persecuted the Christians. Yet to all of these God gave opportunity for repentance.

How long did St. Augustine persist in heresy! How many people at the present time insult God day by day, and yet He spares them, though they have deserved to perish. But why, it may be asked, does God show such forbearance? His counsels are incomprehensible, although sometimes we can discover His designs, and we can see that He is often long-suffering in order to protect the good and to save the wicked. In a cornfield wheat and cockle grow together, sharing the same soil, the same air, sunshine and rain; their roots even are frequently intertwined, so as to be inseparable. In the same way the good and bad live side by side, having a common fortune and blessing. If God were suddenly to punish the wicked, whole families or whole communities would be plunged into misery and poverty, and great suffering would fall upon the innocent as well as the guilty. Hence as a rule He refrains from chastising the bad out of consideration for the good.

No true virtue can exist without a struggle, and there can be no real piety that will not stand a test; so the wicked serve to test and

strengthen the good; they are like a fire, burning up impurities, they may, it is true, prevent the good from prospering, and give rise to much evil, but at the same time their action is beneficial. Think of the stories of Job and of Joseph—both suffered much at the hands of wicked men, but both proved themselves to be really good; the one set us a noble example of patience and confidence in God, and the other of chastity and charity towards enemies. Wicked people often do us more good than harm.

Finally God puts up with the wicked in order to save them, for thousands would be lost if He were to cut them off in the midst of their sins. He desireth not the death of a sinner, and so delays punishment, hoping for amendment. Those who to-day would be condemned as worthless cockle, may prove to be good wheat in the end, for God's grace can accomplish anything, provided that we listen to it. Think of Saul, Mary Magdalene, Augustine and many others who would certainly have been lost eternally, had not God spared them for their salvation.

You see then, my Brethren, that God's forbearance towards the wicked is very beneficial to us all; therefore let us thank Him for it and avail ourselves of it for our own amendment, and also imitate it, so that we may be patient with others, and try to convert them, never giving way to revenge or rash judgment, or despairing of their improvement, but remembering St. Paul's admonition to the Colossians (iii, 12-16), to bear with and forgive one another. Amen.

20. God is True

Since God knows everything and is all-holy and all-just, He is incapable of falsehood, and is absolutely true and sincere. With Him there is no uncertainty, no forgetfulness and no hasty action;

therefore He cannot possibly lead us into error. It is otherwise with men, for our intelligence is often very limited, and we make many blunders owing to our want of knowledge; no doubt we should avoid them if we possessed more insight and comprehension. We forget much, and consequently do things that we should avoid, had we reflected longer and recalled past errors. We are overhasty in word and deed, and want of deliberation leads to many faults, but often we are really deficient in good will, and deliberately are dishonest both in speech and action. God, however, can never be false, for He is holy, loving righteousness and hating iniquity; He can never lie or deceive. There are many passages in Holy Scripture bearing testimony to His truth; *e. g.,* "God is not as a man, that He should lie, nor as the son of man, that He should be changed. Hath He said then, and will He not do? Hath He spoken, and will He not fulfil?" (Num., xxiii, 19). "The word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done with faithfulness" (Ps., xxxii, 4). "His truth (reacheth) even unto the clouds" (Ps., cviii, 5). David exclaims: "Thy word, O Lord, is a light to my feet and a lamp to my paths" (Ps., cxviii, 105). Without God's word we should be like the heathen, who walk in darkness and are exposed to many dangers. History tells us of the follies and errors into which they fall, but with us, thank God, it is otherwise, for in the word of God we have, as it were, a light whereby to regulate our faith and life. All doubt and uncertainty must vanish when once we are thoroughly convinced that God has spoken. St. John the Baptist bore witness to our Lord's veracity when he said: "He that is of the earth . . . of the earth he speaketh; He that cometh from Heaven is above all, and what He hath seen and heard, that He testifieth, and no man receiveth His testimony; but he that hath received His testimony hath set to his seal that God is true" (John,

iii, 31, 32), *i. e.*, whoever receives Christ's testimony is perfectly convinced that He can accomplish the task which God promised to accomplish through Him, viz., our reconciliation, sanctification and salvation.

God's warnings and threats acquire additional weight when we remember that Jesus Christ said: "Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass" (Matt., xxiv, 35). Our whole religion depends upon God's faithfulness, and is founded, not on the wisdom of men, but on the spirit and power of God (1 Cor., ii, 5-16). No matter how incomprehensible God's revelations may appear, they are unquestionably true.

As our Heavenly Father loves truth and hates falsehood, we, His children, ought to follow His example and act according to St. Paul's admonition, "putting away lying, let us speak the truth every man with his neighbor; let us put on the new man who . . . is created in justice and holiness of truth" (Ephes., iv, 23-25). Hence we must be honest and straightforward in all our words and works, avoiding all falsehood, deception and hypocrisy, and remembering that God "continueth faithful" (2 Tim., ii, 13).

21. God is Faithful.

As God is true in all His revelations, He must be faithful in His promises and threats. Because He knows everything, He cannot make mistakes through want of insight, and in this respect He differs greatly from men, who cannot know and foresee many things, and can only guess the course of future events. Nothing can offer any resistance to God, and therefore He cannot be false to His word through inability to keep it. Being holy, He must desire to abide by His promises, and therefore He is faithful. Hence Balaam said: "God is not as man, that He should lie; nor as the son of

man, that He should be changed. Hath He said then, and will He not do? hath He spoken, and will He not fulfil?" (Num., xxiii, 19). Moses assured the Israelites that "the Lord God is strong and faithful, keeping His covenant and mercy to them that love Him" (Deut., vii, 7). David exclaims: "The word of the Lord is right, and all His works are done with faithfulness" (Ps., xxxii, 4). Isaias gives a beautiful description of God's faithfulness in the following words: "As the rain and the snow come down from Heaven, and return no more thither, but soak the earth, and water it, and make it to spring, and give seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so shall my word be, which shall go forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me void, but shall do whatsoever I please" (Is., lv, 10, 11). Our Divine Lord declared that He was faithful to His words, for He said: "Heaven and earth shall pass, but my words shall not pass" (Matt., xxiv, 35), and St. Paul writes: "He is faithful who hath called you, who will also do it" (1 Thess., v, 24).

All God's promises to Abraham were fulfilled most exactly in spite of many obstacles; and we can see for ourselves how true He is in keeping His pledge that the gates of hell shall never prevail against His Church. We must not say that in certain cases, *e. g.*, in those of the Israelites and Ninivites, God's threats and promises were not carried out; for they were only conditional, and when the primary conditions were not fufilled, or ceased to exist, the threats and promises were of course not realized. God said that He would destroy the Ninivites if they did not repent within 40 days; but since they did penance for their sins they were not destroyed. Sometimes God is slow in executing His threats, but this is evidence of His forbearance, not of His failure to keep His word.

The thought that God will surely keep His promises should en-

courage sinners to amend their ways, for He promises to pardon those who repent, and to give grace and help to those who are struggling to do right. The same thought should strengthen sufferers to bear their trials, for He can make all things work together for their good.

We must not forget, however, that God is equally faithful in performing what He threatens; the remembrance of this fact will deter us from sin and move us to do penance for our transgressions. We ought to follow God's example, and be faithful to our promises, knowing well that He is faithful to His threats, to prevent us from breaking His commandments, and to His promises, to inspire us with hope and confidence in the warfare of life, and to enable us to persevere unto the end. Amen.

22. God Is One

We have seen that God is the most perfect Spirit, everlasting, unchanging, everywhere present, omniscient, almighty, allwise, holy, just, good, merciful, longsuffering, most true and faithful. There is but one God, and this truth was known even to Adam, and was transmitted by him to his descendants, from one generation to another. But after men had dispersed into different parts of the world, they forgot this fact, and fell into idolatry, worshipping false gods, and doing honor to creatures rather than to their Creator. Thus they venerated the sun, moon and stars, fire, air, wind and water, and even the works of men's hands were regarded as deities. Sometimes the lower animals were treated as divine, and human beings after death were reckoned amongst the gods. In time actually the vices of men were deified, so that divine honor was paid to Jupiter, the god of conjugal infidelity, the Juno, the goddess of jealousy; to Cupid and Venus, gods of impurity; to Bacchus, the god of drunkenness; and to Mercury, the god of falsehood and deceit. To such a depth did men in their folly sink, after losing their faith in the one true God!

What means did God employ in order to preserve among men faith in Himself as the one and only true God? He revealed Himself to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and these patriarchs handed down their knowledge to their descendants. Moses, who was sent by God, made faith in the one God the basis of all religion, and the worship of this God was the fundamental law of the Jewish people. Nevertheless from time to time the Israelites copied the idolatrous rites practiced by the nations around them, and whenever this occurred, God sent a prophet to recall His faithless people

to the right path; sometimes, too, He made use of a pestilence or some national disaster to revive their faith in Him. After the Babylonian captivity the Jews did not again lapse into idolatry, but they adopted a mistaken idea that the one true God was their God exclusively, and not the God of all mankind, and they persisted in this error until the only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ, proclaimed His Divine doctrines. After His Ascension, the Apostles, who were filled with the Spirit of God, taught everywhere that there was only one true God.

By revealing this truth Himself, and by so carefully preserving men's faith in it, God has saved us from error and from the horrors of polytheism and idolatry. Hence we have good reason to thank Him for teaching us to know Him as the one true God; and we owe Him our adoration and service as well as our gratitude. He is the Father of the human race, so all men form one great family, and we ought to love one another as brethren, being children of the same Father; in this way we shall bear testimony to our faith in the one true God, not only in words, but in deed and in truth. Amen.

23. The Blessed Trinity

The chief doctrine taught in the Old Testament is that there is only one God; there is no antagonism between this doctrine and that of the Trinity, the Father, Son and Holy Ghost, three Persons in one God, for the three Persons possess one and the same nature. The essential properties of anything constitute its nature, and the Divine perfections, which Christianity teaches us to recognize, belong not to the Father alone, but also to the Son and the Holy Ghost, who are no less powerful, wise, holy, everlasting and good than the Father. With regard to their nature no difference

exists between the three Divine Persons, yet the Person of the Father is not that of the Son, nor is the Person of the Son that of the Holy Ghost. There are three distinct Persons, but only one God, for they have a common Divine nature. This doctrine is known as the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity; we should be unaware of it, had God not deigned to reveal to us that He is Triune.

Even before the creation of man, God, though one, spoke of Himself in the plural. For instance in Gen., i, 26, He said: "Let us make man to our image and likeness," and later on He said: "Behold Adam is become as one of us" (Gen., iii, 22). When men were building the tower of Babel, God said: "Come, ye, therefore, let us go down and confound their tongue" (Gen., xi, 7). In these passages there is an unmistakable allusion to several Persons in the Godhead, who deliberate together. It is absurd to suppose that God's use of the plural resembled that of earthly rulers, or that He used it because He was addressing the angels; in that case they would have taken part in the creation of men and have been God's equals. In Holy Scripture there are several allusions to an angel or messenger, who appears like God. He cannot be the Father, since a messenger must be sent by some one else; therefore He must be the Son of God.

When taken in conjunction with many passages referring to the Son and the Holy Ghost, importance must be attached to David's words: "By the word of the Lord the heavens were established, and all the power of them by the spirit of His mouth" (Ps., xxxii, 6). In connection with the death of the first-born in Egypt, this Book of Wisdom (xviii, 14, 15) speaks very emphatically of this Word as a Person, and elsewhere (ix, 17) there is a clear mention of the Holy Ghost: "Who shall know Thy thought except Thou give wisdom, and send Thy holy Spirit from above?" It

is very probable that in this verse "wisdom" means the Word, the Son of God. We do not find that during our Saviour's life on earth, or when the Apostles began to preach after His Resurrection, the Jews raised any objection to allusions to the Son of God or the Holy Ghost. Most likely these doctrines were already dimly known, but most people in Israel regarded them as a mystery to be concealed from the masses, partly as a safeguard against polytheism, to which the Israelites were always inclined, surrounded as they were by pagans and idolaters, and partly to avoid giving scandal to the Gentiles, who would have misunderstood the doctrine of the Trinity. In the New Testament we read: "There are three who give testimony in heaven, the Father, the Word and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one" (1 John., v, 7). Christ bade the Apostles baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost (Matt., xxviii, 91). On the occasion of our Lord's Baptism in the Jordan, all the three Divine Persons were revealed; the Father spoke from Heaven and declared Jesus to be His own beloved Son, whilst the Holy Ghost appeared in the form of a dove (Matt., iii, 16, 17). In His last discourse to His Apostles our Saviour promised to ask the Father to send them another Paraclete, the Spirit of truth (John xvi, 16, 17), and He said subsequently of the same Spirit: "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me" (John xv., 26). Here we have an explicit statement about the three Divine Persons. The Son who asks is He whom none can see without at the same time beholding the Father,—He in whom we must believe no less than in the Father,—He who is in the Father and the Father in Him,—He in whose name the Father sends the Spirit; hence He is one God

with the Father, and the second Person of the Godhead. The Spirit of truth must also be God, because He proceeds from the Father, and is not created by Him. He is of the same nature as the Father, and can give testimony that all belonging to the Father belongs equally to the Son. Jesus was a Paraclete or Comforter, and the Holy Ghost is the other Paraclete whom He promised; therefore the Holy Ghost is God equally with Christ, shares His nature, and is the third Person of the Godhead.

However far back we go in the history of the Christian Church, we find the doctrine of the three distinct Persons possessing one and the same nature, and being but one God. Christians in general upheld this dogma with the greatest energy and conviction, condemning as blasphemous error and heresy every opinion opposed to it and every misinterpretation of it.

We derive no little benefit from this mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, as we understand it. Without it we could not believe the chief fundamental doctrines of Christianity, such as the Incarnation, the Atonement, and the Resurrection. The beautiful proof of God's infinite love for men, which St. John gives in his first epistle, would have no validity. Belief in this mystery is fraught moreover with great consolation. St. John tells us (Chap., i, 14-17) that the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; and hence we perceive, see and feel the goodness and wisdom of God, who gave us a Divine Person, having a nature identical with His own, to be our Teacher, thus preventing our faith in God and His scheme for our salvation from becoming vague and uncertain. Our faith lifts us above all doubt, that would inevitably disturb our peace of mind, deaden our hopes and weaken our resolution to do right. We cannot go astray if we adhere to the teaching of the Church: If Jesus were not true God, He might

have failed in His work, despite His good will and wisdom, and we should not know whether He had failed or not, and consequently could never be convinced of the truth of His doctrines. But, as it is, Christ is a Divine Person, the Son of God and one with the Father; He is the way, the truth and the life (John xiv, 6); whosoever followeth Him, walketh not in darkness (John, viii, 12). The Holy Ghost has at all times aided the Apostles and their successors in the teaching office, guiding their intellect and will; being strengthened by Him they proclaim the truths of Christ, as our Lord Himself taught them, and thus they are preserved from error. Whosoever hears them, hears God, and whosoever despises them, despises God's own doctrine (Luke, x, 16). The sanctification of mankind is also ascribed to the Holy Ghost (2 Thes., ii, 13; 1 Peter, i, 2), who dwells in men, thereby making them the temples of God (1 Cor., iii, 16, 17). Do not these reflections stimulate us to do right? Is not faith in the Blessed Trinity indeed most excellent and beneficial? Ought we not to acknowledge our faith in this wonderful mystery, not only secretly, but also publicly before our fellow-men? The Catholic Church sets us an example in this respect, for she begins every service with an invocation to the Blessed Trinity; in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost she consecrates priests, churches and altars, and blesses bread, water, wine and other things. She recalls the Father, Son and Holy Ghost in all her prayers, and concludes every psalm with the doxology in their honor; she desires nothing more ardently than that all her children should offer praise to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost always and everywhere. It is a beautiful custom to make the Sign of the Cross before and after every important action, for this sign is a public confession of faith in the Most Holy Trinity, a mark of respect, an offering up of all our works, a prayer for

assistance and a solemn declaration that it is our desire to live solely for the honor and glory of the Blessed Trinity. Therefore let us frequently make the sign of the Holy Cross, saying reverently: "In the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen."

24. God, the Creator of Heaven and Earth

Since God knew and loved Himself, He wished there to be other things reflecting His perfections; He willed that the universe should exist, and it came into being; He is the Creator of all things visible and invisible. We learn this from Divine revelation, for in the very first chapter of the Bible we read: "In the beginning God created heaven and earth." In 2 Esdras, ix, 6, it is written: "Thou Thyself, O Lord alone, Thou hast made heaven and the Heaven of heavens, and all the host thereof, the earth and all things that are in it, the seas and all that are therein; and Thou givest life to all these things, and the host of Heaven adoreth Thee." Sirach the wise tells us that "He that liveth forever created all things together" (Ecclus. xviii, 1); He created them of His own free will; He would have been God always, even if He had not created the world. He created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, merely by a word expressive of His omnipotent will. He was not like an architect, who has to make use of the materials at his disposal; no, God created the matter of which things were made, as Moses tells us in Genesis (i, 1, 2): "In the beginning God created heaven and earth, and the earth was void and empty." The mother of the Machabees said to her son: "I beseech thee, look upon heaven and earth and all that is in them, and consider that God made them from nothing, and mankind also" (2 Mach., vii, 28). St. John heard the four and twenty ancients

singing: "O Lord . . . Thou hast created all things, and for Thy will they were and have been created" (Apoc., iv, 11). When in the beginning of his Gospel St. John writes: "The Word was God . . all things were made by Him," he does not mean that Creation was the work of the Word alone, but that the three Persons of the Trinity cooperated in it. Moses gives us a description of the beautiful order in which God created the universe; he writes: In the beginning God created heaven and earth and the earth was void and empty, and darkness was upon the face of the deep . . . and God said: Be light made, and light was made. He made a firmament to divide the waters from the waters. He caused dry land to appear, and ordered it to bring forth green herbs of every kind, and fruit-trees yielding fruit. He commanded lights to shine in the firmament of heaven to give light to the earth and to divide the day and night. He created all the creatures that swim in the waters, the birds that fly in the air and the beasts of the earth, and God blessed all that He had made, and gave them power to increase and multiply, each according to its own kind. The whole world was created for God's glory and for the good of men, and no one can study its marvels without being forced to recognize God's wisdom, power and goodness, so that he is impelled to exclaim with David: "The heavens show forth the glory of God, and the firmament declareth the work of His hands" (Ps. xviii, 1). Our world was created chiefly for the benefit of the human race; the sun sheds his light and heat upon the earth, making plants and animals grow, and the moon and stars illumine the night. Plants and animals supply men with food and clothing, and many other things seem to have been created to give us pleasure, and surely it behooves us to use all these gifts for the glory of Him who made them for our sake. St. Paul urges us to do so, for he

says: "Whether you act or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor., x, 31). Let us act thus, and continually thank God for His marvelous Creation, resolving never to make a bad use of anything that we possess or enjoy, but to employ all the good gifts that He has bestowed upon us in accordance with His holy will. It is in this way alone that we shall be able to show true honor to the Creator of heaven and earth, and prove our gratitude for all His goodness. Amen.

25. God, the Preserver of all Things

God is the Preserver, as well as the Creator, of the universe. By His Almighty Word He created heaven and earth and all that therein is, out of nothing, and by the same power He prevents them from falling back into non-existence.

1. He preserves the universe, the heavens and the earth just as long as it is His Divine will to do so; unless He wills it, nothing that He has created can change or perish.

2. He preserves all creatures in the number, order and connection beneficial to the whole. No kind of creature has ever completely died out.

3. He preserves in the world the same order that has always existed. The sun, moon and stars still obey the laws imposed upon them at the beginning. Day and night alternate with the same regularity as of yore, and the four seasons recur always in the same order.

4. God preserves men, *i. e.*, He gives us strength, ability and means to live as long as He desires.

In short, everything that lives, moves and has any being, owes its continued existence to God's power, will and word. All that He has created must necessarily be dependent upon Him, and owe

to Him its preservation no less than its existence. How many things do we require to keep us alive! to how many dangers are we exposed daily! If God did not preserve us, we should inevitably perish. The Bible reminds us of this fact in many places. David speaks of God as making the earth "bring forth grass for cattle and herbs for the service of man" (Ps. ciii, 14;) and Solomon says: "Great power always belonged to Thee alone . . . but Thou hast mercy upon all, because Thou canst do all things . . . for Thou lovest all things that are" (Wisd., xi, 22-25). Sirach, the wise man, writes: "The works of God are done in judgment from the beginning, and from the making of them He distinguishes their parts, and their beginnings in their generations. He beautified their works for ever, they have neither hungered nor labored, and they have not ceased from their works" (Ecclus., xvi, 26, 27). Isaias exclaims: "Behold the Lord God shall come with strength, and His arm shall rule . . . He shall feed His flock like a shepherd, He shall gather together the lambs with His arm, and shall take them up in His bosom, and He Himself shall carry them that are with young. . . . The Lord is the everlasting God, who hath created the ends of the earth; He shall not faint nor labor, neither is there any searching out of His wisdom; it is He that giveth strength to the weary " (Is., xl, 10, 11, 28, 29).

In the New Testament also there is testimony to God's preservation of the universe. Our Lord Himself said: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow, nor do they reap, nor gather into barns, and your heavenly Father feedeth them. . . . Which of you by taking thought can add to his stature one cubit? For raiment why are you solicitous? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin, but I say to you that not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these. And

if the grass of the field . . . God doth so clothe, how much more you! Be not solicitous therefore, saying: 'What shall we eat? or what shall we drink? or wherewith shall we be clothed?' For after all these things do the heathens seek. Your Father knoweth that you have need of all these things" (Matt., vi, 25-32). It is quite certain that we owe our preservation to God's fatherly care; let us therefore be thankful to Him and trust Him who provides for even the birds and flowers. We must not be presumptuous and suppose that He is bound to give us everything, but if we ask Him humbly for what we need for our preservation, He will not fail to hear and answer our prayer. Amen.

26. God, the Ruler of all Things

As soon as God determined to create the world, He decided with the utmost wisdom how it should be governed. When He made this decision He perceived clearly all the events that ever have occurred, and ever will occur. He saw all the happiness and misery, all the good and evil, all the thoughts and resolutions of men, all the changes in nature and in human existence, and even then He provided for all things, ordering them so that every creature at the moment appointed for it to come into being, should have the means of attaining the end for which it was created, and of glorifying God. Hence whatever takes place in the world, carries out God's design. Everything great and small, all good and bad fortune, life and death—all are foreseen, ordered and determined by Him, and nothing occurs without His knowledge and consent, for He rules all things. We cannot indeed find out and understand how He does this, nor can we see how everything that happened contributes to the fulfilment of His eternal design. We are too small and too shortsighted to comprehend how this can be, but the

fact remains that He governs the world, and we learn this truth from our own experience, history and the teaching of Holy Scripture. No household, town, nation or state can exist unless there is some one to rule it, and still less could the universe exist without a ruler, who is none other than God, since He alone in His Omniscience knows everything. He is all-wise, and so He knows the best final ends and the means adapted to their attainment. He is good, and it is His delight to promote His creatures' welfare. He is Almighty, and nothing can resist His will. He is the Creator, Lord of heaven and earth, and consequently He alone is capable of ruling the world. Our reason tells us that if He is the Omniscient, good and Almighty Creator and Lord of all things, He must be the Ruler of the universe. History, too, confirms our belief in this fact. Who caused it to rain for forty days, and thus destroyed mankind? Who sent down fire upon the wicked cities? Who raised Joseph to almost royal dignity, after he had been sold by the brethren who hated him? Who enabled Moses to work so many great miracles? Who overthrew all the mighty empires of antiquity and allowed other states to arise? Who sent the long-desired Redeemer to bring happiness to the world and work greater miracles than Moses ever wrought? None but God could do all these things, for He alone is Almighty. Finally I will quote a few passages from Holy Scripture which tend to confirm our faith in God's being the Supreme Ruler of the whole world. King David exclaimed: "Thine, O Lord, is magnificence, and power, and glory, and victory . . . Thou hast dominion over all; in Thy hand is power and might" (1 Paral., xxix, 11, 12). Sirach, the sage, says: "Good things and evil, life and death, poverty and riches are from God" (Ecclus., xi, 14). Solomon writes still more emphatically: "It is the part of man to prepare the

soul, and of the Lord to govern the tongue," "Lots are cast into the lap, but they are disposed of by the Lord" (Prov., xvi, 1, 33), or as the proverb says. "Man proposes, but God disposes." In another place Solomon says: "The steps of man are guided by the Lord, but who is the man that can understand his own way?" (Prov. xx, 24). The Prophet Amos writes (iii, 6): "Shall there be evil in a city which the Lord hath not done (*i. e.* permitted)?" Isaias foretold the destruction of the Assyrians, who desired to exterminate the Jews, and not merely to chastise them (x, 5-12); and Jeremias said: "I know, O Lord, that the way of a man is not his, neither is it in a man to walk and to direct his steps" (x, 23), and the word of the Lord came to him saying: "Cannot I do with you as this potter? . . . Behold as clay in the hands of a potter, so are you in my hand" (*ibid.*, xviii, 6). In the Book of Wisdom we read (xii, 12-18): "O God, who shall say to Thee: 'what hast Thou done?' or who shall withstand Thy judgment? or who shall come before Thee to be a revenger of wicked men? or who shall accuse Thee if the nations perish, which Thou hast made? For there is no other God but Thou, who hast care of all. . . . As Thou art just, Thou orderest all things justly, thinking it not agreeable to Thy power to condemn Him who deserveth not to be punished; for Thy power is the beginning of justice, and because Thou art Lord of all, Thou makest Thyself gracious to all. For Thou showest Thy power, when men will not believe Thee to be absolute in power and Thou convincest the boldness of them that know Thee not. But Thou being master of power, judgest with tranquility and with great favor disposest of us, for Thy power is at hand when Thou wilt." He could hardly desire a plainer recognition of God's power than is contained in the above quotation. Finally in the book of Daniel (ii, 21) we read: "God

changeth times and ages, taketh away kingdoms and establisheth them."

There is no lack of testimony to God's power in the pages of the Old Testament, and I will refer to only one passage in the New Testament, that, namely, where our Lord says: "Not a sparrow falleth on the ground without your Father; the very hairs of your head are all numbered" (Matt., x, 29-31); thus it is clear that even the most trifling events are subject to God's rule.

If we consider the collective testimony of Holy Scripture, history and our own reason, we cannot fail to be convinced that God governs the world; everything takes place in accordance with His will. This faith should afford us comfort and encouragement in times of temptation, danger and misfortune, and especially at the hour of death. If we remember that all is subject to God's will, we cannot despair, no matter what may befall us, we have only to submit to His holy will, and sooner or later our troubles will cease. We pray daily: "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven," therefore it should be enough for us to know that we are suffering in accordance with God's will. Even if for a time we are overwhelmed with sorrow, let us say with holy Job: "The Lord gave and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."

27. God's Providence

No father provides for his children with as much loving care as God provides for us. From the very beginning He has arranged all things for our welfare, and promises to help and save us in all our necessities, if only we trust Him with childlike confidence and have recourse to Him in all our troubles. He urges us to rely upon His care and assistance, not to be solicitous about our wants, and not to seek help elsewhere. In every age He has pledged Himself to provide for those who trust Him, and our Divine Lord revealed most plainly the gracious providence of God when He said: "Ask, and it shall be given to you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." God desires our confidence, not formal and eloquent prayers. "The heathens . . . think that in their much speaking they may be heard; be not you like to them, for your Father knoweth what is needful for you before you ask Him." Our merciful Father, who supplies the irrational beasts with a shelter, and the birds with food, and who adds beauty to the foliage and flowers, cannot forget us, for we are made in His likeness, but will gladly and freely supply us with what we need, if we ask it of Him with confidence.

God has faithfully kept His promises to all who have relied upon His word. Job was overwhelmed with afflictions of every kind, and all hope of help seemed to have failed, but still he trusted in God, who was watching over him, and at last unexpected relief from his sufferings came to him. Susanna, though innocent, was threatened with ruin and death, in fact sentence had been pronounced against her, and she was actually about to be stoned, when God, on whom she relied, bestowed on her help, liberty and life.

With perfect truth David exclaims, when speaking of God's providence: "I have been young and now am old, and I have not seen the just forsaken, nor his seed seeking bread; . . . the Lord will rescue them from the wicked, and save them, because they have hoped in Him" (Ps. xxxvi). My Brethren, we need many things in this life—our mind requires guidance, instruction and peace; our body wants food, clothing, shelter and comfort. Moreover, troubles and trials of every kind abound; discontent, ignorance, melancholy and anxiety burden our minds, poverty, weakness, crime and disease undermine our health; hatred, envy, persecution and injustice disturb our souls; no one escapes suffering in some form or other, and life is a perpetual warfare. To whom shall we turn for aid when we are afflicted in mind or body? Whence shall we seek help amidst the trials and perplexities of life? There is only One who watches over us and knows all our needs, there is only One who sees our sorrows and offers us His tender compassionate assistance. Let us place all our confidence in God, and seek in Him our refuge. There is nothing on which we can so firmly rely as on His providence, for God is not only full of fatherly love, but He is also all-powerful. Vast, infinite and indescribable is His might; in His sight all else that is great appears small, all that is strong appears weak, and all that is high appears low. He disposes of all things with His will, and everything obeys His word. In the 82nd Psalm David extols His power, and ends with the words: "Thou alone art the Most High over all the earth."

Nowhere does God display His omnipotence more than in helping and saving those who rely upon Him. He scatters their enemies like dust, and no obstacle in their path, no evil and no danger can harm them. Think how stubbornly Pharao resisted the departure of the Israelites from Egypt, and when at last they reached the Red

Sea they were pursued by a pitiless enemy, and seemed certain to fall victims either to the sword or to the waves. In their distress they lifted their hands towards heaven, beseeching God's assistance, and forthwith the waters of the sea were divided, so that God's people could pass through in safety, whilst their enemies, attempting to follow them, perished miserably. Nothing is too hard for God to accomplish.

As His fatherly providence is so powerful and gracious, let us always turn to Him for help. No matter what our position may be and what trials await us in the future, let us rely not on creatures, not on the skill and strength and wisdom of men, but on the all-prevailing and fatherly providence of God, saying with David: "The Lord is my light and my salvation, whom shall I fear? The Lord is the protector of my life, of whom shall I be afraid? . . . If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear." Whatever may befall us, we will not despair, but set all our hopes and confidence in our good and almighty Father, who never fails to watch over those who trust Him. Amen.

28. Trials and Misfortunes.

When God created the world, everything was good; He did not create death, for He takes no pleasure in the destruction of the living. It was not through Him, but through the sins of men, that death and all that we call evil came into the world.

1. Many of our misfortunes are due to our own fault. Numerous diseases are the result of intemperance and excess, and not only bad health but countless other evils also come upon mankind, because they have not learnt how to subdue their passions and check their impulses as they ought. Poverty and misery often follow upon extravagance and luxury; fires are caused by care-

lessness, and pestilence breaks out in consequence of men's disregard for cleanliness and the laws of sanitation. Wars that devastate whole countries are due to the ambition and greed of rulers. Still these evils, that come upon us by our own fault, are often used by God to promote our real welfare. A drunkard is frequently reformed through the suffering resulting from his intemperance, and physical ills warn the libertine to mend his conduct. All the evils permitted by God are intended to be wholesome warnings, stimulating us to true amendment.

2. Not everything that we consider evil is really such, for we are too shortsighted to survey God's whole scheme of government. For instance, an innocent child may die, and its parents in their sorrow regard its death as a great misfortune, but could they fathom God's designs, they would kneel down and thank Him for taking their child away from this world before it was stained and poisoned with sin.

A thunderstorm may suddenly destroy a farmer's crops, and he thinks this a sad trial, but could he realize its necessity and eventual benefit he would look upon the storm, not as a personal affliction, but as destined to do good, and he would thank God accordingly. Many complain that their hopes have been frustrated, and yet before long they realize that the fulfillment of their desires would have been disastrous.

On one occasion a gentleman intended to cross from Ireland to England, but as he was going on board, he fell and broke his leg. His friends condoled with him, but he remarked that it was all for the best. They could not understand how a broken leg could be a good thing, and he replied: "God knows better than I do; I maintain that it is a good thing for me to have broken my leg." That he

was right was soon apparent. He was left behind and the ship sailed without him and was wrecked a few hours later; all the passengers perished and his broken leg saved his life. It would be easy to accumulate similar stories from our own experience.

3. Real evils frequently tend to our salvation, if we use them as God intends. We ought to take to heart what St. Paul wrote to the Hebrews (xii, 5-12): "Neglect not the discipline of the Lord, neither be thou wearied whilst thou art rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loveth He chastiseth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth . . . what son is there whom the father doth not correct? If you be without chastisement . . . then are you bastards and not sons. Moreover, we have had fathers of our flesh for instructors, and we reverenced them, shall we not much more obey the Father of spirits and live? . . . All chastisement for the present indeed seemeth not to bring with it joy, but sorrow; but afterwards it will yield, to them that are exercised by it, the most peaceable fruit of justice." Yes indeed, the calamities that God from time to time allows to fall upon the human race all tend to our welfare if we use them in accordance with His designs.

(a) They draw our attention to the state of our conscience. Many would continue dead in sin unless some sickness or sorrow aroused them. The prodigal son might never have returned to his father, had not the pangs of hunger assailed him.

(b) Trials and crosses remind us of God, whom we are only too ready to forget, when all is well with us. Manasses would probably never have repented if he had not been taken as a prisoner to Babylon.

(c) Misfortunes teach us caution, prudence and vigilance. After an intemperate man has had a bad illness, he will be more careful to avoid excess.

(d) Trials convince us of the fleeting character of all earthly possessions, and teach us not to cling to them.

(e) They often humble us and make us trust in God, since we learn from them how weak we ourselves are, and how much we need help from above.

(f) Misfortunes tend to convince us of the immortality of our souls and of the eternity that awaits us. We see that it is impossible for everything to end with this life.

(g) Misfortunes test our patience and loyalty towards God; virtue is tried by adversity as gold in the furnace; as long as we are prosperous, it is nothing particularly creditable to be true to God.

(h) Trials bring us into peculiarly close contact with God, and give us a delight in prayer. Sometimes our Heavenly Father deprives us of our daily bread to make us ask Him for it with more childlike confidence.

(i) Trials remind us of death and the judgment, and so stimulate us to amend our way of life.

(k) They give us opportunity to atone our sins, and in this way they are a true purgatory.

(l) They afford us an opportunity to display our religion for the glory of God and the edification of man.

(m) They promote self-knowledge, which is extremely good for us. It is in time of affliction that we discover what sort of people we really are.

(n) They make us sympathetic with the sorrows of others. If we have learnt by experience what suffering is we shall be more ready to sympathize with our neighbors.

(o) What we think evils often prove to be the richest sources of blessing, because "to them that love God, all things work together unto good" (Rom. viii, 28).

Job derived great benefit from the painful loss of all his possessions, the contempt of his wife and family and his repulsive disease. His faith and confidence in God were strengthened, and he became a model of patience, pleasing in God's sight, and in the end he was happier than ever. Joseph benefited by the hatred and persecution of his brethren, for through them he became ruler of Egypt, and was able to protect his own family and console his aged father. It was by way of suffering that our Divine Lord entered into glory; the Cross was the instrument of His exaltation. We must not therefore always look upon misfortunes as evils and grumble at God's providence. What He does is good; so let us love and praise Him, not only when all is well with us, but also when trials come upon us. Amen.

29. The Holy Angels.

The angels are far more perfect beings than we are, both in their constitution and the object for which they were destined. They are not creatures of flesh and blood, and their souls are free from the trammels of a body that continually inclines to earthly things and prevents our rising above them. They do not feel that tendency to evil which is our unhappy inheritance from our first parents, for angels are pure spirits and there is nothing earthly in them. They care nothing for the gratifications that our fallen nature craves; their gaze is not fixed on this world, but, as our Saviour tells us, they always behold the face of His Father in Heaven. God designed them to rejoice in the contemplation of His Divine perfections, and to carry out the commands that He issues from His throne. As His servants they conduce to His glory, as His friends they enjoy the happiness of contemplating Him, and as our helpers they watch over and protect us.

Although the imperfection of our nature and the burden of our bodies weigh us down to earth, still there exists between ourselves and God a connection effected and maintained by the angels. In a sense they are our servants, for they watch over our spiritual needs and over the means of satisfying them. It is a great honor for us to be protected by the very angels who stand before the throne of God and delight in contemplating Him; and we must not overlook the dignity of Him who commissions them to take care of us. The more powerful a nation and its ruler are, the greater respect is due to their ambassadors, and for this reason it is impossible to imagine any of God's creatures to be more worthy of honor than the angels, because they are God's ambassadors, receiving instructions directly from Him. If we consider our own unworthiness, we cannot understand why spirits so exalted and perfect, who stand before the throne of Almighty God, should accompany and guard us on our way through life. That they do so must be the result of a miracle of boundless love on God's part. St. Augustine tells us that God takes very great care of men, and reveals the depth of His love for us by appointing angels to protect us. This He does out of the incomprehensible love that He feels for us. St. Paul says that the angels are "all ministering spirits, sent to minister to them who shall receive the inheritance of salvation" (Heb. i, 14).

Our gentle guardian angels are in a peculiar sense ministering spirits, shielding our souls from the countless dangers to which they are exposed. We all know by experience that we are very weak, only too ready to yield to temptation and fall into sin. Sometimes the snares laid by the evil one are so cleverly concealed that we are quite unaware of them; sometimes our natural tendency to what is bad acquires such force that we are carried away by it and

offer no resistance. It is then that our guardian angel comes to our help, if only we are willing to obey his counsel. He awakens in our hearts caution and fear and makes us perceive our danger and the snares into which we are on the point of falling, and then we recognize our frailty and cry to God for aid. We do not indeed see with our outward eyes all the services rendered us by our guardian angels, but we cannot question their reality if we reflect upon the perils which we have escaped in the course of our life. We must acknowledge that we owe much to our guardian angels' care, for without it we should inevitably have perished.

If we are so misguided as to refuse obedience to our guardian angel's advice, they nevertheless intercede for us with God, pleading on our behalf and reminding Him of our weakness and the violence of our temptations and the craftiness of our foes. In this way they seek to diminish our offences in the sight of God, and ere now they have often induced Him to spare us and postpone chastisement. They pray for us, just as the steward in the Gospel pleaded for the tree that was to be cut down and cast into the fire because it was unfruitful. There are many instances of the readiness with which the angels accomplish God's holy will and render most valuable services to men. Since, then, they are very perfect beings and enjoy incessantly the beatific vision, it follows that we ought to treat them with the utmost reverence and acknowledge how much we owe them. The higher the rank of anyone with whom we have to deal, the more respectful should be our behavior. We can best show our reverence by listening willingly to the suggestions of our holy guardians and by striving to make ourselves worthy of their protection.

If a man receives from another some benefit that he cannot repay, he ought at least to feel true and genuine gratitude towards

his benefactor, and surely there are no limits to the gratitude that everyone owes to his guardian angel. No greater benefits can be imagined than those which these ministering spirits confer upon us. With the deepest interest they watch over our actions; they accompany us wherever we go, and witness all that befalls us. They read our innermost thoughts and see plainly all our intentions, and know why we act as we do; they add force to our prayers by their intercession and obtain for us the graces that we need.

Therefore, my Brethren, let us be grateful to our holy guardians; let us love and trust them, often remembering their presence and never grieving them by our sins or driving them away. Let us continually ask their help and follow their guidance, striving to be pure in body and mind and to serve God and our neighbors with loyalty equal to theirs. If we act thus, we too shall some day enjoy the happiness and consolation of beholding forever the face of our Heavenly Father. Amen.

30. The Wicked Angels, or Devils.

When God created the angels they were all good and happy, but not all remained so, for some were blinded by pride and refused obedience to God, and therefore they were driven out of heaven and cast into hell, where they must stay forever and ever. We call these fallen angels devils, and their chief is Satan, whom St. John speaks of as the great dragon and old serpent (Apoc. xii, 9). Our Lord called them unclean spirits because they are stained with pride and disobedience, and liars and murderers because they lead men astray. Such rebellious spirits are of course God's enemies, and they make war incessantly upon truth and goodness, whilst trying to encourage the growth of idolatry, unbelief, impiety and vice. Our Saviour spoke of the devil as the prince of this world

(John, xvi, 11), and St. Paul calls him the prince of darkness (Ephes., vi, 12). The devils, being enemies of God, must also be enemies of men; they envy us the happiness to which by God's grace we can attain, and therefore the serpent led Adam and Eve into sin and brought misery into the world. The devil caused Judas to betray our Lord, and did his best to lead the other Apostles astray; he even ventured to tempt Christ Himself. At the present day He still tempts men to sin, and goes about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter, v, 8). He knows how to influence our minds to inspire evil thoughts and to deter us from keeping our good resolutions. It is our duty to withstand all evil suggestions, whether they proceed from men or devils, and to persevere in prayer, vigilance and self-control. St. Paul writes: "Brethren, be strengthened in the Lord and in the might of His power; put you on the armor of God that you may be able to stand against the deceits of the devil; for our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the world of this darkness . . . Therefore take unto you the armor of God that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and to stand in all things perfect. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breast-plate of justice, and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; in all things taking the shield of faith, wherewith you may be able to extinguish all the fiery darts of the most wicked one. And take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God; by all prayer and supplication praying at all times in the spirit, and in the same watching with all instance and supplication" (Ephes., vi, 10-18). If we follow this advice, neither men nor devils will succeed in plunging us into sin against our will. St. Augustine compares the devil with a chained

dog, that can bark at people, but cannot bite them unless they go up to him of their own accord.

By special permission of God the devil can sometimes injure both our bodies and possessions. We read, for instance, in the Old Testament that Satan was allowed to deprive Job of his children and home in order to test his virtue, but he was forbidden to destroy his life. In the New Testament many occasions are recorded on which our Lord and His Apostles drove devils out of men possessed. God permitted the devils to possess them, in order to prove to all the world that His Divine Son had power to cast them forth. At the present day the devil can do us harm, but not just as he chooses; only if God permits it is he able to injure us, just as wicked men can injure others only by God's permission.

How can we escape the wiles and wickedness of the devil? In the first place by faith in Jesus Christ, who can help us in all difficulties; secondly by invoking the Holy Name of Jesus, by which the Apostles and other Saints have thwarted the devil's designs; thirdly by making the sign of the Cross, for it was by dying on the Cross that Jesus crushed the serpent's head, and delivered us from the power of Satan; but the best means of all is to do our best to keep our conscience clear, so that God may be our friend, and the holy angels our protectors; then we shall have nothing to fear from the devil. Let us therefore renounce all the works of the devil, all pride, lust and avarice, and then we shall be humble, pure and unselfish, like the angels, and shall enjoy unspeakable happiness in this world and the next. Amen.

31. The First Human Beings

After the earth had been formed into a dwelling-place fit for beings who could appreciate its beauties, God said: "Let us make man to our image and likeness, and let him have dominion over the whole earth, and every creeping creature that moveth upon the earth." And God created man to His own image (Gen., i, 26, 27). Everything else was created by God's mere word, but when man was to appear on earth the Godhead seems to have deliberated. We have here a striking testimony to the dignity of human nature; man is made in the likeness of God; he is a free, rational being with dominion over the whole realm of nature, and able to use all her resources. It behooves us often to remember our likeness to God, that we may not fancy ourselves at liberty to gratify our lower instinct; it is only when we are conscious of being higher than the rest of creation that we exert ourselves to preserve and intensify our resemblance to God, and to advance gradually on the way of moral perfection.

The book of Genesis contains a detailed account of the creation of man, who was fashioned out of the slime of the earth, and into whom God breathed the breath of life, so that he became a living soul. Our bodies therefore are made of earth, but our souls are of higher origin, for they are God's breath. Now God being a spirit, His breath is not material. "The dust shall return into its earth, from whence it was, and the spirit to God, who gave it" (Eccles., xii, 7).

Adam was at first alone, and must soon have perceived that the animals were not his equals, and could not render him the assistance that he needed. God recognized this fact, and said: "It is not good

for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself." And the Lord God cast a deep sleep upon Adam, and when he was fast asleep, he took one of his ribs and filled up flesh for it, and . . . built the rib . . . into a woman, and brought her to Adam. And Adam said: "This now is bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called woman, because she was taken out of man" (Gen., ii, 18, 21-23). Here we have the origin of the marriage bond. Human beings do not come together like irrational animals, but God unites persons of different sexes in marriage. The bond between husband and wife is closer and more permanent than that between parent and child. Adam and Eve were the first human beings united by God in marriage, and from them the whole human race is descended. St. Paul proclaimed this fact when preaching at Athens; "God," he said, "who made the world and all things therein . . . hath made of one all mankind, to dwell upon the whole face of the earth" (Acts, xvii, 24, 26). All men have a common ancestor, therefore they are all brothers and sisters.

Man was equipped by his Creator with wonderful powers of mind and body. He can live in every sort of climate and assimilate most various kinds of food, and at first he was destined to enjoy immortality of both body and soul. This was not due to any natural property of the human body, but was a free gift from God. "God made not death" (Wisd., i, 13). "God created man incorruptible, and to the image of His own likeness He made him" (ibid., ii, 23). He did not intend man to die, but death was a consequence of sin.

Moreover, Adam's body was not liable to ailments, as ours are; he had no experience of sorrow, anxiety and hard work; he lived in a delightful region, where every kind of fruit, good to behold and pleasant to taste, grew of its own accord from the fertile soil. He had occupation that did not exhaust his strength, and he was not

harassed by any cares. Man was created to be a rational creature, possessing intelligence, power of judgment, reason and free will. He was not to act blindly or on impulse, but with prudence; and he was not simply to enjoy the good things about him, but to discriminate among them and employ his knowledge of good in the practice of virtue. Man is a rational and moral being, and therefore he resembles God. When we say that one thing is like another, we mean that there is a resemblance between them. Now God is a Spirit, and consequently man's likeness to Him is in his spirit, not in his body. Adam had no inclination to evil, and all his desires were under control and submission to his will. He was holy, and his soul was free from all disorderly passions, and his will coincided in every respect with God's will. By God's grace he could accomplish with ease and pleasure any work that was good, just and right. Man, being thus equipped with such wonderful qualities and faculties, has a higher destiny than merely to enjoy the good things of earth. As a rational and moral being it is his duty to think, act and will as God does, and to obey the laws that God has made known to him either through his reason, or by any other means. In this way he can confirm and increase his resemblance to God. We are generally taught that man was created to serve God and be happy with Him forever. This is of course true, but through His only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ, God bids us be perfect, as our Father in Heaven is perfect (Matt., v, 48). Man ought to strive incessantly to attain to true sanctity, for this is the object for which he was put into the world, and the faculties bestowed on him by his Creator pledge him to make this his aim. Should we not, as Christians, set a high value upon our dignity and aim? No other can possibly be compared with it. I wish that we all recognized the true dignity and destiny of man! We were created by God

Himself to His own image and likeness; we each received from Him a pure, beautiful, immortal soul, and surely we should not be indifferent to the maintenance of our lofty dignity and the attainment of our glorious destiny! Let us not risk the loss of either through even a little sin; and let us beware of forgetting God, who has lavished upon us such glorious gifts of body and of soul. If we have tried hitherto to do right, let us resolve to persevere, and strive to do better still in future, that we may become more like God, and more fit to be united with Him forever. Amen.

32. The Fall of Man

God made a garden of delights as the dwelling-place of the first human beings. The fertile soil produced everything that they needed; various trees bore fruit, and they were at liberty to eat what they chose, with the sole exception of the fruit of one tree, which they were forbidden to touch. To Adam God said: "Of every tree of paradise thou shalt eat, but of the tree of knowledge of good and evil thou shalt not eat. For in what day soever thou shalt eat of it, thou shalt die the death" (Gen., ii, 16, 17). This prohibition was pronounced by God in His fatherly goodness, because Adam and Eve had not yet been taught by their own experience. He wished to warn them, as a loving father warns his children, lest they should hurt themselves, for, according to their Creator's design, their bodily and mental development was to be effected by obedience and mutual love. They were to notice that man was not left free to make an arbitrary use of everything in nature, and so long as they obeyed God's command, they were happy. But the devil, being envious of their good fortune, awaited a moment when Adam was elsewhere in the garden, and Eve near the forbidden tree, and then he said to her: "Why hath God com-

manded you, that you should not eat of every tree of paradise?" And she answered: "Of the fruit of the trees that are in paradise we do eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of paradise, God hath commanded us that we should not eat, and that we should not touch it, lest perhaps we die." And the devil said to the woman: "No, you shall not die the death; for God doth know that in what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." And the woman saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to the eyes, and delightful to behold; and she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat (Gen., iii).

In this way Adam and Eve transgressed God's commandment, and it was not long before they felt the consequences of their disobedience.

(a) A change took place in their feelings, and their eyes being opened, they saw that they were naked, so they sewed fig-leaves together as coverings.

(b) Because they were disobedient they were afraid and uneasy in mind, and when they heard God's voice in the garden, they hid themselves among the trees. They had lost their frankness and contentment and no longer delighted in intercourse with their heavenly Father, but were impelled to avoid Him and hide from Him.

(c) As a result of their disobedience Adam and Eve had many troubles to bear. Before their expulsion from Paradise God said to Eve: "In sorrow shalt thou bring forth children," and to Adam: "Cursed is the earth in thy work; with labor and toil shalt thou eat thereof all the days of thy life." He had worked before, but chiefly for pleasure and as an occupation; thenceforth his heart was never satisfied, and his needs and anxieties increased.

(d) Their disobedience brought the punishment of death upon

Adam and Eve, and they had to learn what it is to die. Their worn out bodies bore within them the seed of death, and the troubles and labors that they had to undergo finally brought them to the grave.

(e) Spiritual as well as corporal death was the chastisement of their disobedience; they transgressed God's commandment and thwarted His holy will, and consequently they lost their original innocence and justice and God withdrew His love and favor and deprived them of all claim to eternal happiness. Thenceforth their inclinations tended to evil, and they were easily led to indulge in sinful desires and actions. In short, they ceased to be God's children and heirs of eternal salvation, and their souls became liable to death as a result of sin. Not only Adam and Eve, but also all their descendants incurred this penalty for their first fall into sin, as Sirach says: "A heavy yoke is upon the children of Adam from the day of their birth until that of their burial" (Ecclus., xl, 1); for we all suffer from concupiscence and the trials and hardships of life, and finally we must all die.

1. Disorderly desires, contrary to reason and God's law, are felt by all men. Even St. Paul was subject to them, for he says: "When I have a will to do good, evil is present with me." Religion and our own reason both warn us against considering everything that flatters the senses to be good, but we are easily carried away and strive after what attracts us, though it is forbidden. We see how reasonable are the commands laid upon us, and yet we act in a way opposed to and not in conformity with them. We should like to do right, but we have no strength to put our good desires into execution, and this lack of strength is due to the predominant influence of the senses upon our nature. This defect proceeds not from God, but from our first parents.

2. We have to undergo many trials, hardships, dangers and sicknesses in the course of our life, and it is with great exertion of mind and body that we triumph over them. We have to toil and defend our possessions and resist many inward and outward enemies. Man is exposed to so much contradiction that he seems to live in perpetual misery, with nothing to hope for but a change of affliction.

3. Lastly, we are all subject to the law of death. "God created man incorruptible, and to the image of His own likeness He made him; but by the envy of the devil, death came into the world" (Wisd., ii, 23, 24).

This sin committed by our first parents and the guilt and punishment that it involved, God's displeasure and an incapacity for sanctity and happiness, insofar as it has been transmitted from Adam and Eve to the rest of mankind, is called original sin. Job asked: "Who can make him clean that is conceived of unclean seed?" (xiv, 4), and David, when praying for forgiveness, cried: "Behold, I was conceived in iniquity, and in sins did my mother conceive me" (Ps., i, 7). Jesus Himself said to Nicodemus (John, iii, 5, 6) that a rebirth by water and the Holy Ghost was necessary, because that which is born of the flesh is unfit to enter the kingdom of God. St. Paul derives sin and death from Adam, and says that we have all sinned in him, and so by our very nature are children of wrath and worthy of chastisement. These passages in Holy Scripture show that original sin is a very real thing, and not even our Lady would have been exempt from it, had not God, foreseeing her dignity as Mother of Christ, allowed her from the first moment of her existence to participate in the merits of His Passion and adorned her with sanctifying grace, so that she was unstained by original sin.

My Brethren, let us always obey God's commandments. Our

first parents disobeyed their Creator, and we have considered the results of their sin; evil impulses and inclinations gained dominion over them, they felt fear and anxiety and endured much suffering, until finally death put an end to their sojourn in this world; and they would have had to undergo an eternity of anguish had God not had mercy upon them. Let us always be mindful of our own frailty so that we may avoid sin and not live in sorrow and grief, and in dread of everlasting death. Amen.

33. The Necessity of Redemption

The devil brought sin into the world and it was necessary that its stain should be removed if men were not to perish forever. Sin is a voluntary transgression of God's commandments, it is wrong in itself and ought not to exist. Moreover, it is an offence against God, for when we sin we disobey and resist Him; we despise His goodness and love and disturb the design of His Divine wisdom; we outrage His honor in word and deed, frustrate His intentions and desecrate His gifts. Attached to sin are guilt and a curse, which must be removed, if the sinner is not to be condemned. When sin has once been committed it cannot be undone but remains forever as a wrong against God. In His kingdom it is impossible to overlook or forget this wrong, this guilt and curse and the sorrow due to sin—hence, if the sinner is to escape condemnation, he must be punished, or atonement must be made for him. God's justice requires this and our Lord Himself said (Luke, xii, 47): "The servant who knew the will of his lord and prepared not himself, and did not according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. . . . Unto whomsoever much is given, of him much shall be required."

Our first parents' sin was a mortal sin, involving the loss of

eternal life. Misery, suffering and death would have been melancholy consequences of sin, but to forfeit eternal life would have been the greatest of all misfortunes. If escape from this were possible, it could only be by the removal of the sin itself, and therefore there was imperative need of atonement and redemption unless the human race was to continue in misery and death.

Man could not himself get rid of his sin; when a thing is once done, he cannot undo it, and so he cannot deliver himself from sin. St. Peter could not recall his threefold denial of Christ, nor could Mary Magdalen make good her wicked and scandalous life. They might repent, bewail and abhor their sins, but they were unable to undo them.

Fallen man was not in a position to make satisfaction to God's justice, for, as a finite being, he was too insignificant to make reparation sufficient to remove his own infinite guilt and to satisfy God. Man's very repentance, tears and good works needed justification before they could be a pleasing, far less an adequate, sacrifice of atonement. Therefore man, being in need of help, could of himself do penance for his sin, but not make atonement and remove it. By our alms, fasting, mortification and other good works we may, it is true, make some amount of satisfaction for the temporal punishment due to sin, but the sin itself and the guilt attaching to it remain, and can be removed only by a higher power. Nor can we prevent the consequences of sin, and substitute joy for sorrow, strength for weakness, and life for death, because we are poor, weak, suffering mortals. Therefore we should have had to mourn and suffer for all eternity had God not had mercy on us and sent His Son to deliver us from sin and misery. "For the Son of Man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt., xviii, 17). You see how much sorrow and pain sin brings upon us. Let us take this

lesson to heart and strive to avoid all sin. Our own experience shows that no human being can help us, so let us turn to our Divine Redeemer and ask His assistance and then we shall realize the truth of St. Paul's words: "Christ is able to save forever them that come to God by Him, always living to make intercession for us" (Hebr., vii, 25). Amen.

34. The Promised Messias

It is a well-known fact that all ancient nations, Jews and Gentiles alike, believed that man had fallen from a pristine state of innocence and would eventually be restored by some great, superhuman Saviour. In the case of the Jews this belief and expectation were based on revelation and on prophetic utterances. When sentence was pronounced against our first parents, the Divine promise was given that some day the seed of the woman should crush the serpent's head—*i. e.*, overcome the power of Satan. This first promise of future salvation was treasured as a precious inheritance and handed down to Seth's posterity. Abel, however, was a type of the coming Redeemer, for he brought an innocent lamb as a sacrifice, and in every pre-Christian religion sacrifice was invariably the central point of worship, typifying the doctrine that sinful man, being worthy of death, can receive grace and reconciliation only through a bloody sacrifice of an innocent victim in his place. After sin and corruption had spread over all mankind, Noe alone remained loyal to God, and, having been saved from the deluge, passed on to Sem and his descendants the true knowledge of God, and the promise of salvation. They preserved this religion, but when even in the family of Heber, the best of the Semites, it seemed on the point of being lost, as all the surrounding tribes were idolaters, God brought Abraham, who was steadfast in the faith,

from Chaldaea into the Promised Land and on three occasions renewed the promise that of his line should be born the future Redeemer. The sacrifice of Isaac was a type of His sacrifice, and the kingdom of Israel represented His dominions. The promise, confirmed to Isaac and Jacob, was transmitted by the latter to his son Juda, from whom, i. e., from whose descendants, the sceptre should not be taken away "until He come that is to be sent, and He shall be the expectation of nations." Moses acted as God's representative, and brought the Israelites, who had become a nation, out of bondage in Egypt and established God's covenant with them; and then again by the mouth of Moses God promised to raise up in the midst of Israel a prophet like Moses, whom they would have to obey. Thus Moses, too, was a type of Christ. He did not enter the Promised Land, but Josue led the people thither, and the establishment of the Old Covenant and religion was complete. It consisted chiefly in the Law and the promise of the Messias, for whose coming the Israelites longed more and more ardently, as they realized more fully how impossible it was for them, on account of their sins and frailty, to observe the holy law in spirit and perfection. The mysterious ritual, that centred in sacrifices offered by the priests, was intended to heighten this consciousness of guilt and to increase the desire and hope of redemption. All the history of the Israelites, the chastisements inflicted upon them, and their marvellous deliverances, were intended to serve the same purposes and acquire a meaning only when we regard them as types of the Messias and His kingdom. The prophets of Israel put this interpretation upon them, and all the prominent men in the Old Testament, Abel, Noe, Abraham, Moses, Josue, Samson, David and Solomon, are types of Christ. The three great institutions of the Jewish theocracy, viz., the kingship, the priesthood and the office of prophet,

all bear a distinctly Messianic character, and the Messias was to unite in His person these three dignities in a peculiar manner. I cannot here discuss the Messianic prophecies in detail to show you how they gradually become more and more definite; I can only draw attention to the most essential points. In the first place, the Messias appears as a great king of superhuman power, who delivers Israel from all enemies, judges the wicked, subjects all the Gentiles to his sway, and bestows upon his people riches and peace; of his dominion there is to be no end. The Messianic kingdom seems thus to be an earthly kingdom, but the later prophets developed more fully the spiritual idea of it, according to which the work of the Messias was to be the moral and religious regeneration of the human race, and the union of all nations in one great kingdom of God. From this point of view the work of the Messias consists principally in concluding and abolishing the old, imperfect covenant that was limited to the people of Israel, and substituting for it a new, perfect and everlasting covenant, embracing all nations, so that the Gentiles should be converted to the God of Israel and share in the promises, and this is the fulfilment of God's pledge to bless all nations in Abraham's seed.

In the New Covenant, or, which is the same thing, the new religion, the old sacrifices necessarily have no place, since the blood of bulls and sheep can never expiate sin, and a merely external and formal offering is hateful in God's sight. In their stead we have a pure and holy worship and a new and spotless sacrifice offered in every region of the world. This new Covenant is based upon a general redemption, in which, however, only true conversion enables us to participate, and it consists essentially in forgiveness of sin and inward sanctification through the infusion of a new spirit. This spirit that renders us new men is Divine, and the Messias com-

municates it to us, thus restoring men to God's favor. Hence the kingdom of the Messias is the permanent dominion of justice, peace and righteousness, and even nature will share in this glory and happiness. What are the characteristics of the Messias, who is to accomplish this work? He is described as being truly king, prophet and high priest, and thus the most perfect representative of God on earth. He is this in virtue of His office, but He is also the most faithful of God's servants, and the embodiment of justice, wisdom, grace and sanctity. He is not a tyrant exercising force, but the one Good Shepherd, seeking the lost sheep and bringing them to plentiful pasture. He executes justice without respect of persons, but at the same time He is full of forbearance and mercy and refrains from breaking the bruised seed, or extinguishing the flickering light. As prophet and teacher He is the Light of the World, and His word is like a two-edged sword. Towards the poor and lowly He is gentle and tender, but terrible towards the proud, whilst He slays the impious with His breath. The Spirit of the Lord rests upon Him, as well as the spirit of wisdom and understanding and counsel and strength and knowledge and piety and fear of the Lord. He is the Lord's Anointed, sent to preach to the meek, to heal the contrite of heart, to preach release to the captives, and to comfort all that mourn.

How wonderfully did God provide for the salvation of mankind! and how precious must a human soul be in His sight! We are happy enough to live after the coming of the long-promised Messias, who is no other than our Lord Jesus Christ. In Him all these prophecies have been fulfilled; therefore let us venerate Him as God's messenger, the supreme King of Kings, the great High Priest and the chief of all prophets, and let us faithfully follow Him and obey His words. Amen.

35. Jesus Christ, True God and True Man

We have hitherto been considering the first article in the Apostles' Creed, and trying to know God and His infinite perfections as far as it is in our power to do. Now we pass on to the second part of the Creed, in which we profess our faith in Jesus Christ. It is easy to show both from Holy Scripture and tradition that Jesus Christ is true God.

A. 1. In several passages of Holy Scripture He is called God, *e. g.*, in the first chapter of St. John's Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," and in Romans, ix, 5, St. Paul says that Christ, who is over all things, God blessed forever, is descended from the fathers, according to flesh.

2. Jesus Christ is put on a level with God the Father, He speaks of Himself thus in John, v, 19, where He says: "What things soever the Father doth, these the Son also doth in like manner." "He that believeth in me, doth not believe in me but in Him that sent me. And he that seeth me, seeth Him that sent me" (John, xii, 44, 45). "I am the way, the truth and the life; no man cometh to the Father but by me" (John, xiv, 6). St. Paul says: "Every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father" (Phil., ii, 11).

3. Jesus Christ is God because Divine attributes are ascribed to Him, such as eternity, omnipotence, omniscience and other perfections. St. John says: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God . . . All things were made by Him" (John, i, 1, 3). St. Paul writes: "All things were created by Him and in Him" (Col., i, 16). Moreover, in other

passages we read: "The Father loveth the Son, and sheweth Him all things which Himself doth" (John, v, 20). "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead corporally" (Col., ii, 9).

4. Jesus Christ is true God because Divine honor is paid Him. "The Father hath given all judgment to the Son, that all men may honor the Son, as they honor the Father" (John, v, 23). "God hath exalted Him, . . . that in the Name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth and under the earth" (Phil., ii, 10). "When He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world He saith: 'Let all the angels of God adore Him'" (Hebr., i, 6).

B. It can be proved also from tradition that Jesus Christ is true God, because all the Fathers of the Church are unanimous on this point. I will refer only to St. Ignatius the Martyr, who was one of St. John's Disciples. In his epistle to the Romans he writes: "I trust that it is well with you in our God, Jesus Christ. Christ, our God, is a Father; let me be a follower of the sufferings of Christ, my God." The Catholic Church has invariably condemned as heretics all who deny or question the Divinity of Christ; and every general council has emphatically upheld this doctrine. As early as 325 A. D. it was declared solemnly at Nicæa that Jesus Christ is true God, God of God, Light of Light, of one substance with the Father. Thus the doctrine of our Lord's Divinity is firmly established both by Holy Scripture and by tradition, and through this doctrine the Gospel acquires its Divine character, and the Sacraments their sanctifying power. Neither the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar nor the Sacrifice of the Mass would have any meaning if we did not believe in Christ's Divinity. Let us cling to this belief and beware of heretical teaching; we know that it behooves us to worship and obey Him as our Lord and God.

But at the same time our Lord Jesus Christ was truly man, as He is designated in Holy Scripture. St. John says that the Word was made Flesh and dwelt among us (i, 14); and St. Paul writes: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and man, the Man Christ Jesus" (1 Tim., ii, 5). "The grace of God . . . by the grace of one man Jesus Christ hath abounded unto many" (Rom., v, 15). Our Lord had a body and soul, just as we have. He spoke of the temple of His body (John, ii, 21), and said to His Disciples after the resurrection: "See my hands and my feet that it is I myself; handle and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as you see me to have" (Luke, xxiv, 39). On the Cross He cried with a loud voice: "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." His whole life, passion and death reveal His human nature, for He was born, He grew, ate, drank, slept and suffered pain and death. Hence He was not only God, but also Man, "being made in the likeness of man," sin alone excepted.

What a glorious truth! Our Saviour was at once God and man, and human nature acquires dignity from the fact that it was in Him united with the Godhead. With what confidence therefore may we draw near to God through Jesus Christ, who, by taking upon Himself our nature, became our Brother, solicitous for our welfare, and who still liveth to make intercession for us! Let us trust Him, since He is God and Man, and love Him above all things. **Amen.**

36. Jesus Christ, Redeemer of Mankind

The Son of God assumed our human nature in order to rescue mankind from the misery into which they had been plunged by sin. They were in a pitiable state, for they had sinned, in spite of having been created by God to lead just and holy lives in this world and in the next to enjoy eternal happiness. They had fallen a prey to

ignorance, weakness, malice and sin, and were destined to destruction. They needed to be saved from the penalties of sin, instructed in the truth, urged to do right, and encouraged to look forward to a joyful future.

1. Jesus Christ enabled us, despite all our tendency to evil, nevertheless to avoid it, for, as St. Paul says: "the grace of God our Saviour hath appeared to all men, instructing us that, denying ungodliness and worldly desires, we should live soberly, and justly, and godly in this world, looking for the blessed hope and coming of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity and might cleanse to Himself a people acceptable, a pursuer of good works" (Tit., ii, 11-14). Hence Christ instructed men on the subject of good and evil, setting them an example of holy life; He bestowed grace on all who wished to amend, for "what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending His own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin, hath condemned sin in the flesh that the justification of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh, but according to the spirit" (Rom., viii, 3, 4). Our Saviour also established a Church that aims at making us happy here and hereafter, and that this may be the better effected He instituted the Holy Sacraments.

2. In this way Christ obtained for us the grace of justification to deliver us from sin, and make us children of God and heirs of Heaven, for we are released from both original and actual sin. "To Him all the prophets give testimony that by His Name all receive remission of sins, who believe in Him" (Acts, x, 43). "God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world may be saved by Him" (John, iii, 17).

3. Christ also took away the punishment due to our sins, and

that is why St. John the Baptist spoke of Him as the Lamb that taketh away the sins of the world (John, i, 29); and our Lord said of Himself: "The Son of Man is not come to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give His life a redemption for many" (Matt., xx, 28). He repeated this statement at the last supper when He handed the cup to His Disciples, saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my Blood of the New Testament which shall be shed for many unto remission of sins" (Matt., xxvi, 28).

4. Jesus Christ redeemed us by His Passion and Death, as St. John tells us: "He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but only for those of the whole world" (1 John, ii, 2). St. Paul, too, says: "As by the offense of one, unto all men to condemnation; so also by the justice of one, unto all men to justification of life" (Rom., v, 18); and again: "Christ died for all, that they also who live may not now live to themselves, but unto Him who died for them and rose again" (2 Cor., v, 15). Faith in the redemption of mankind through Jesus Christ should be to us a source of comfort and encouragement. Man, being stained with original sin, had lost all hope of eternal happiness and of deliverance from the guilt and punishment of his actual sins. How miserable would have been our lot had Christ not redeemed us by His life, passion and death, and shown us the sanctity of the law, the shame of sin and the beauty of virtue! He encourages us to aim at amendment of life and to be humble, patient, charitable and grateful to Almighty God.

Well may we, my Brethren, exclaim with St. Augustine: "O unfathomable mercy! O love, never sufficiently to be extolled! Thou didst send Thy Son to release a servant, and God became man to rescue fallen man from the powers of evil. Truly the most ardent lover of men is Thy Son, our Lord and God, for

whom, in His great love, it was not enough to lower Himself and take flesh from a virgin; He desired to suffer also the death of the Cross, and to shed His Blood for our salvation. He, the good God, in all His gentleness and love, came to seek and to save that which was lost. Who ever imagined such love and mercy? Who would not marvel at the multitude of His compassions? Who would not exult in His unspeakable charity? Thou didst send Thy Son to condemn sin in the flesh and to fulfil in Him Thy justice towards us! What thank-offering can we make Thee, O God, for Thy great goodness and mercy?"

Let us, my Brethren, thank God and His Divine Son for our redemption; let us be heartily grateful, as long as we live, and do our best to prevent these inexpressible benefits from being wasted by our sins. Amen.

37. The Childhood of Our Lord

By means of His former revelations God had prepared the world for the coming of the promised Messias, and at last the time came for His appearance. Men were full of expectation and longing for Him who was to be the Saviour of Israel and of all nations. How did God accomplish His designs? St. Luke tells us. "The Angel Gabriel was sent from God into a city of Galilee, called Nazareth, to a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph . . . And the angel being come in, said to Mary: 'Hail full of grace, the Lord is with thee. Blessed art thou among women.' Mary, having heard, was troubled at his saying, and thought with herself what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said to her: 'Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found grace with God. Behold thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and shalt bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus; he shall be great, and shall be

called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of David his father, and he shall reign in the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.' And Mary said to the angel: 'How shall this be done, because I know not man'? And the angel answering said to her: 'The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee. And therefore also the Holy which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God . . . because no word shall be impossible with God.' And Mary said: 'Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word.'" Thus our Lady consented to take her part in this greatest work that God ever accomplished on behalf of men.

With pure and virtuous souls God is well pleased, and therefore He chose Mary as mother of His Son. Mary had dedicated her virginity to God, but when He revealed His design to her, she submitted with humility. Her humble submission was rewarded, inasmuch as the birth of her Divine Son did not destroy her virginity. All was indeed ordered in a marvelous manner! After her conception, Mary went with haste into a city of Juda and entered into the house of Zachary, and saluted her cousin Elizabeth, who, on hearing her salutation, was filled with the Holy Ghost and cried with a loud voice, saying: "Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb! And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me? . . . Blessed art thou that hast believed, because those things shall be accomplished that were spoken to thee by the Lord." How genial our Lady was! She could not keep to herself the inexpressible joy of being mother of God, but shared it with her cousin, so that both praised and thanked God for His infinite goodness.

It came to pass . . . that there went out a decree from Cæsar

Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled, and all the Jews went to be enrolled, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his espoused wife. When they were there she brought forth her first-born son, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Mary and Joseph set us an example of obedience to authority, and it was by special providence on God's part that the Redeemer of the world was born in poverty, in a cave that served as a cattle-stall. Riches, display and renown, though valued highly by the world, are nothing in God's sight; man's true dignity is measured by his goodness, sanctity, moderation, patience, and submission to God's will, and it was in order to raise mankind to this true greatness that the Son of God was born into the world. He taught this lesson both by word and by example, even from the moment of His birth.

In the same country were shepherds watching and keeping the night-watches over their flock, and behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and the brightness of God shone round about them, and they feared with a great fear. And the angel said to them: "Fear not; for behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, that shall be to all people; for this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a token to you of the truth of my words; you shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly army, praising God. After the angels departed from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, "Let us go over to Bethlehem and see what is come to pass, which the Lord hath shewed us." And they came with haste and found Mary and Joseph, and the infant lying in

the manger, and were then convinced of the truth of the angel's message. The birth of Jesus was the most happy event for angels in Heaven and men on earth. Those believe in Him whose souls are free from pride, lust and avarice, as were the souls of the shepherds. Simplicity, humility and a childlike spirit made them willing to accept the angel's tidings, and we should follow their example and praise and thank God for sending our Divine Saviour to us; we should do this more especially at Christmas and celebrate that great festival with lively sentiments of Faith, Hope and Charity.

After eight days the Divine Child was circumcised, in accordance with the Mosaic law, and His name was called Jesus, as the angel had said. When the usual time had elapsed, Mary and Joseph took Him to Jerusalem to present Him in the Temple and make the prescribed offerings. When they entered the Temple, they met Simeon, a priest, who was a just and God-fearing man. It had been revealed to him that he should not die until he had seen the Lord's Anointed. On seeing the Divine Infant, he took Him into his arms and praised God, saying: "Now Thou dost dismiss Thy servant, O Lord, according to Thy word in peace; because my eyes have seen Thy Salvation, which Thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to the revelation of the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel." Simeon spoke to Mary also, and said: "Behold this child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which shall be contradicted. And thy own soul a sword shall pierce, that out of many hearts thoughts may be revealed." After doing all that the law required, Mary and Joseph went back to Nazareth, and the Child grew and waxed strong, full of wisdom, and the grace of God was in Him.

What a splendid example of humility and obedience is set us by

Joseph and Mary, and how intense must have been the joy of aged Simeon at being permitted to see and to hold in his arms the long-desired Saviour of the world. It was now easy for him to die, and he would look forward to the future happiness of Heaven. If we love and reverence Jesus, He will be the cause of our resurrection, not of our fall, and we shall face death calmly, anticipating eternal union with Him in the next world.

Not long after the presentation of the Child Jesus in the Temple, wise men came from the east to Jerusalem, saying: "Where is He that is born King of the Jews? We have seen His star in the east and are come to adore Him." King Herod hearing this was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him, and assembling the chief priests and scribes he inquired of them where Christ should be born. They replied: "In Bethlehem of Juda." Herod sent the wise men to Bethlehem charging them to report to him, on their return, all that they had seen, "since he too wished to adore the wonderful Child." They found the house where the Holy Family was living, and falling down they adored the Child and offered Him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh.

Only King Herod and people like him were alarmed at the birth of a new king. They did not follow the example of the wise men from the east, and seek the new-born Saviour in order to adore Him; no, they were too idle and crafty to act thus. Let us imitate the wise men, and then we shall be deemed worthy to behold and worship the Divine Child. Being mysteriously warned not to go back to Herod, the wise men returned home by another route, and an angel appeared to Joseph, bidding him arise and take the Child and his mother and fly into Egypt, because Herod was about to seek the Child to destroy him. Joseph obeyed, and they set out by night for Egypt. When Herod perceived that he had been out-

witted, he was angry and ordered all the male children in Bethlehem of two years old and younger to be put to death, hoping thus to get rid of the King whom he dreaded. After Herod's death the angel of the Lord appeared again to Joseph, bidding him take the Child and Mary back to Nazareth. The working of God's providence is unmistakable in this whole story. The Divine Child was threatened with a violent death, but was miraculously saved and Herod was punished for his cruelty, whereas Joseph and Mary submitted willingly to God's guidance. May we be preserved from all dissimulation, selfishness and cruelty, such as characterized Herod, and imitate rather the obedience paid so readily by Joseph and Mary to God's will. The Holy Family went every year to Jerusalem to celebrate the Pasch, and when Jesus was twelve years old they went thither as usual. At the conclusion of the festival they returned, but the child Jesus remained in Jerusalem, and His parents knew it not. They supposed Him to be in the company, and went a day's journey, and then sought Him among their kinsfolk and friends. Not finding Him, they went back to Jerusalem to look for Him, but it was only after three days' search that they found Him in the Temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, hearing them and asking them questions. In astonishment His mother said: "Son, why hast thou done so to us? Behold Thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing." And Jesus answered: "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?" They did not understand Him, but He went down with them to Nazareth and was subject to them. And Jesus advanced in wisdom and age and grace with God and men. It is the duty of parents to take their children to church and train them to be attentive there; but unhappily we see more children playing in the streets than we see at Mass. Much depends upon the parents,

for they have it in their power to take their little ones to church just as well as to take them to places of amusement. What a splendid example did Jesus set to all children! He lived in His parents' house and was subject to them! I wish it were possible to say of all children that they advance in wisdom and grace as well as in age, and that they always obey and respect their parents.

This is all that the Bible tells us of the childhood of Jesus Christ. It is a short story, but very instructive. His birth was attended by many wonderful events, and we all, old and young alike, may learn many useful lessons from the Holy Family. Let us follow their example and live and act as Jesus, Mary and Joseph did, and then our families too will be holy and pleasing to God and men. Amen.

38. Jesus As Teacher, Worker of Miracles and Prophet

For thirty years our Lord led a quiet, hidden life, and then He began the great work of redemption, which He had come from Heaven to accomplish. It was not without design that He awaited His thirtieth year, since, according to the law of Moses, no one under that age was permitted to hold any priestly office, or to come forward as prophet, or to give public instruction. Therefore it was in obedience to the law that Jesus refrained from entering upon His public ministry earlier, although He made preparations for it. To St. John the Baptist, His forerunner, was allotted the task of preaching penance and of baptizing, in order that men might more readily accept our Lord's teaching. Jesus Himself came to receive Baptism at St. John's hands, and then His Divine mission was solemnly proclaimed. Thereupon He went into the desert and spent forty days in prayer and fasting, and after resisting all temptation on the part of the devil, He began His work, having thus in

solitude gained strength and power to accomplish it. How wonderful His discourses must have been! How well adapted to raise the hearts and enlighten the minds of men! Had we been present, when Jesus was preaching in Judea, we should have followed Him and listened eagerly to His words. Yet, after all, we have lost nothing, for the evangelists, who heard these beautiful instructions, have recorded the chief points, and if we read the Gospels and Epistles we can find out for ourselves what and how our Saviour taught.

At the outset of His ministry He gathered round Him a band of Disciples and Apostles, calling them because of the goodness of their hearts, as He cared nothing for rank, descent or learning. His mode of treating them deserves particular notice, since He protected them against unjust accusations, whilst He silently endured their shortcomings, or only gently reproved them. If ever sharpness was necessary, He used it, but showed that it was the outcome of His zeal, not of any aversion. Whenever they asked Him to explain things that He had said, He did so most willingly. All who teach and train others should deal with them thus.

Ignorance, prejudice, superstition, unbelief, intellectual blindness, malice, sin and misery prevailed everywhere at the time when our Lord began to preach; and His doctrines all aimed at the extirpation of sin and the increase of virtue, at the diffusion of truth, and at enlightening mankind on the subjects of God and the worship due to Him, charity, virtue and salvation, and at encouraging men to fufil all their duties faithfully. To reveal God in His Son, the Saviour of the world, was the object of all Christ's teaching. God was made known to us as our Father in Heaven, who desires our happiness, and in His love of us gave us His only-begotten Son that we might have life. He knows our needs, and He who feeds

the birds of the air and clothes the lilies of the field, will not suffer us to lack food and clothing. It is for us to seek first the kingdom of God and His justice, and then everything else will be given us. There is but one God, one Heavenly Father, and our chief business is to do His will; we must fear not men, who can only kill the body, but God, who can destroy both soul and body. Christ called upon His hearers to do penance and be converted, for God is merciful and ready to forgive all sin.

Our Lord's method of teaching was most admirable; He missed no opportunity of saying a word in season, in the synagogues, in the Temple, at feasts, on mountain-sides, on plains, in towns and villages, in the desert and on the sea.

He proclaimed that He was the Messias sent by God, the only-begotten Son of God, through whom all men should be saved, but He taught this doctrine so adroitly that His own followers could not fail to understand it, whilst it gave rise to no disturbance among the rest of the people. In His discourses He always took into account the character of His audience; to the multitudes He spoke with forbearance, to His Disciples with familiarity, and to the Pharisees seriously and sternly. In order to impress His teaching more thoroughly upon the minds and hearts of His hearers, He used the most vivid descriptions and similes, adapting His words to their needs and comprehension. Far from rejecting all the ideas current among the Jews, He corrected and explained them, as far as they admitted of correction and explanation. All His doctrines and admonitions, all His words of consolation and warning, all His reproofs and threats bear the impress of love, zeal, vigor and confidence. No one ever taught like Jesus.

He derived His teaching not from other men, nor from Himself, but chiefly from Divine inspiration, as He said: "I have not spoken

of myself, but the Father who sent me, He gave me commandment what I should say and what I should speak" (John, xii, 49). His assertions were worthy of all credence, for His own most holy life confirmed them, and they were in themselves most pure and exalted. Nevertheless in order to strengthen men's faith in His Divine mission, and to leave no loophole for doubt, Jesus accomplished works such as were far beyond human power or the unaided forces of nature. Only God's omnipotence could effect the miracles that He wrought, and they and His prophetic utterances both prove that He was commissioned by God.

He worked miracles on inanimate nature, as when He changed the water into wine at Cana, when He fed thousands of people with a few loaves and fishes, when He calmed the sea with a word, and when He walked on its surface as if on dry land. He worked miracles on the sick, effecting instantaneous cures, giving sight to the blind and speech and hearing to the deaf.

He worked miracles even on the dead, for He raised to life Jairus' daughter, the widow's son at Naim, and Lazarus, who had lain four days in the tomb. Over and above working miracles, He uttered many prophecies relating to Himself and others. He foretold His own death, the cowardice of His followers, the fate of the Apostles, the destruction of Jerusalem, the rapid growth of the Church and the coming of the Holy Ghost, all of which prophecies were fulfilled in every detail. One would suppose that none who saw and heard Him would fail to believe in Him and so work out their own salvation, but such was not the case. Many heard Him speak and witnessed His miracles without being converted, and Christ Himself predicted this. Aged Simeon, on seeing the Divine Infant in His mother's arms, exclaimed: "This child is set for the fall and for the resurrection of many in Israel, and for a sign which

shall be contradicted" (Luke, ii, 34). This prophecy was literally fulfilled; Jesus had many disciples, but also many enemies; He was the resurrection of the former, and the fall or condemnation of the latter.

Many believed in and followed Him, as did His Apostles, Nicodemus, the Roman centurion, Martha, Mary and Lazarus, and many others, both rich and poor. But many refused to believe, and His own countrymen, the chief priests, the Scribes and Pharisees, hated and despised Him, and brought about His death.

Let us resolve never to act like the people whom I have just mentioned, but believe most thoroughly in our Lord's Divinity, love Him with our whole hearts and do our utmost to follow His example. If we do this, His teaching, miracles and prophecies will be to us also the means of salvation.

39. Our Lord's Passion and Death

The malice of the Pharisees, chief priests and scribes had reached its climax, and our Lord was fully aware of their murderous intentions, but nevertheless He went up to Jerusalem, having told His Disciples all that would befall Him there. At His bidding a she-ass and her colt were brought Him, and the Disciples laid their garments upon them, and sat Him thereon. Many people came to meet Him as He rode towards Jerusalem, some spread their garments on the way, others cut down branches from the trees and strewed them before Him, and the multitudes that preceded and followed Him cried: "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord, Hosanna in the highest!" The people recognized who Jesus really was, and paid Him all possible honor. May we, too, reverence Him and proclaim aloud our joy and gratitude!

Soon after reaching Jerusalem, Jesus celebrated the Pasch with His Disciples, and at the conclusion of the last supper He stood up, laid aside His upper garment, and washed their feet in order to set them an example of humility and willingness to serve others. Then they again sat down to table, and he took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His Disciples, saying: "Take ye and eat, this is my Body." Afterwards He took the chalice, gave thanks to God and handed it to them, saying: "Drink ye all of this, for this is my Blood of the New Testament that is shed for many for the forgiveness of sins." With these words our Saviour instituted the Sacrament of Holy Communion.

After celebrating the Pasch and instituting a commemoration of His death, Jesus addressed His followers in touching words and poured out, as it were, all His love upon them. He comforted them by saying that He was one with the Father, and that they would receive whatever they asked of the Father in His Name; He promised them the Holy Ghost, bade them keep His commandments, gave them His blessing, urged them to be steadfast, charitable and patient under adversity; He foretold the persecutions that they would suffer, assured them that it was good for them that He should go away, and renewed His promise to send the Holy Ghost; He declared that all their sorrow should be turned into joy and that their prayers would certainly be heard. Finally He raised His eyes to Heaven, and besought His Father to give Him then at the close of His earthly life the glory that He had enjoyed before His coming into the world. He begged God to keep His Disciples faithful and to sanctify them and all who should hereafter believe in Him.

Having uttered this prayer, Jesus went with His Disciples across the brook Cedron to a garden where He ordered them to remain whilst He went forward and prayed. They, too, were to pray that

they might not enter into temptation. He took with Him Peter, and James and John, and began to fear and to be heavy, and said to them: "My soul is sorrowful even unto death, stay you here and watch." Then going forward a little, He fell on His face and prayed: "My Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me; nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt." He prayed thus three times, and then an angel appeared from Heaven strengthening Him, after which He was ready and willing to suffer anything, and to die a most painful death in obedience to His Father's will. He was full of courage when He said to His Disciples: "The hour is at hand when the Son of Man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us go; behold he is at hand that will betray me." Scarcely had He uttered these words when a great rabble, led by Judas, came to arrest Him. Judas stepped up and kissed Him, saying: "Hail, Rabbi," this being the signal for our Lord's arrest. He was taken first to Caiphas, the High-priest, at whose house the lawyers and ancients were assembled. They sought for false witness against Jesus, wishing to condemn Him to death, but although many false witnesses came forward, their evidence did not agree. Jesus said nothing until the high-priest said to him: "I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us if thou be the Christ, the Son of God." He replied: "Thou hast said it. Nevertheless I say to you, hereafter you shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of the power of God, and coming in the clouds of Heaven." Caiphas rent his garments, saying: "He hath blasphemed, what further need have we of witnesses? Behold, now you have heard the blasphemy, what think you?" They all answered: "He is guilty of death." Then the servants and sentries spat in His face, buffeted Him, and struck His face with their hands. Throughout the whole night our Lord suffered most shameful ill-treatment, and

when morning dawned, the priests, scribes and ancients assembled to see how they might put Him to death. He was brought before them, and as He adhered to His previous statement, they confirmed the death-sentence and took measures to secure its execution, for they personally had no right to put anyone to death, this power resting with Pontius Pilate, the Roman procurator, to whom the Jews now conveyed Jesus, and after Pilate had sanctioned our Lord's crucifixion, not a moment was lost; He was forced to carry His Cross to Golgotha, where He was crucified with two malefactors. During His whole trial He displayed marvelous calm, patience and gentleness, yielding ready obedience to His Heavenly Father for the atonement of our sins. When He reached Calvary, one of the soldiers offered Him some wine mixed with myrrh and gall, which was intended to render Him insensible to pain, but He refused it, for He wished to preserve consciousness to the end, and to be strengthened only by the knowledge that He was giving proof of His love and obedience to God, and of His desire for the salvation of men. As He hung upon the Cross He set us an example of charity even towards enemies, for He begged God to forgive His murderers, and showed mercy to one of the thieves crucified with Him. No sinner need ever despair of obtaining mercy and pardon, for Jesus at the end of His life forgave a criminal and promised him the joys of paradise, because with all his heart he turned to Him.

Again, our Lord set us an example of filial love, since He commended His mother to St. John's care and protection. Well is it for the man, who, like our Divine Saviour, can exclaim at the hour of death: "It is consummated!" for, like Him, he can confidently commit his spirit to the hands of his Creator. Suffering, however intense, must have an end, and many a mourner consoles himself with the thought that it does not last beyond this life.

Let us remind ourselves briefly of the benefits that we derive from our Lord's passion and death.

1. He obtained for us forgiveness of our sins, and saved sinners, provided that they repent of their evil deeds, from suffering chastisement in the next life.

2. He restored to us the sanctifying grace which we had lost through sin. In spite of our tendency to evil and our inability to do right of ourselves, this grace gives us strength to overcome our disorderly inclinations and to become pleasing in God's sight.

3. Jesus gave back to us our right to eternal happiness; but for Him, not even the best of mankind could have hoped for an everlasting reward, since finite goodness cannot merit infinite happiness. But because Jesus died for us, the greatest sinner may hope for salvation, unless he persists in his sin.

4. By His passion and death Jesus obtained for us grace to assist us in keeping God's commandments. We are too weak to order our actions according to God's will, but when His grace sustains us, we can accomplish what would otherwise be impossible.

5. Lastly, by His passion and death our Lord showed us how we ought to bear our little sorrows that we often thoroughly deserve. When the troubles of life oppress us, and it is hard to do our duty, and those about us are unkind and hostile, we should look up to our Redeemer, the author and finisher of our faith, and learn from His example how to be steadfast in adversity. Amen.

40. The Resurrection

Our Saviour, after dying for the salvation of the whole world, went to Limbo, where the souls were detained of those just men who had believed in the Messias. Jesus went to release them, and remained in Limbo whilst His body lay in the grave. This deliverance of the holy patriarchs and other faithful servants of God had been foretold by the prophets. Osee writes: "I am the Lord thy God . . . I will redeem them from death. O death, I will be thy death; O hell, I will be thy bite" (Osee, xiii, 14); and Zacharias says: "Thou also by the blood of Thy Testament has sent forth Thy prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water" (ix, 11). St. Paul, too, alludes, to the release of the souls from Limbo in Col., ii, 15, where he writes: "Despoiling the principalities and powers, he hath exposed them confidently in open shew, triumphing over them in himself." In order to understand this mystery we must remember that *all* the righteous, whether born before or after our Lord's coming, are saved by the merits of His Passion. Until He died and rose again, the gates of Heaven were closed, and the souls of the just were carried after death either into Abraham's bosom, or into Purgatory, as is now the case with those that still have to atone for their sins. Another reason why Christ went down to Limbo was that He might manifest His power there, as well as in Heaven and on earth, and St. Paul tells us that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those that are in Heaven, on earth and under the earth. Therefore in His infinite mercy our Saviour not only died in agony for our sake, but He also penetrated into the depths of Limbo, to deliver thence the souls dear to Him, and take them with Him to Heaven.

The plainest and most irrefutable proof of the actual occurrence

of the Resurrection is afforded by the events that preceded it, that took place on the day itself, and that followed it.

(a) Long before His death, and consequently long before His Resurrection, Christ predicted it, and this fact was so well known that the chief priests were aware of it, and induced Pontius Pilate to have the Sepulchre sealed and a watch set, lest, as they said, our Lord's Disciples should come secretly by night to remove the body, and then pretend that He had risen again. All their attempts to frustrate God's design turned to His greater glory, for had the Holy Sepulchre been left unguarded, none but Christ's own disciples would have been witnesses to His Resurrection, and His enemies might have had some apparent ground for their false assertions regarding the theft of His body. There might in fact have been some excuse for doubting the Resurrection had not the chief priests themselves remembered our Lord's prophecy that He would rise again on the third day, and had they not remembered it just when His own Disciples forgot it. Thus it came to pass that the sentries stationed by the priests witnessed the Resurrection, and the evasive explanations suggested had no weight at all against their testimony. The explanations were indeed clumsy enough; if the sentries had been asleep, how could they know that the Disciples had removed the body? And if they had seen nothing, their testimony was worthless.

(b) On the day of His Resurrection, our Lord was seen not once, but many times. He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to the other women, to St. Peter, to the two Disciples on the way to Emmaus, and to all the Apostles assembled in the Cenacle. Unbelievers tell us that all these people possessed such lively imaginations that the continual thought of Christ suggested to them that they really saw Him in bodily form. Was the imagination equally strong

in every case? Did the two women, who came to embalm the body, expect Christ to rise or to have risen again? He spoke with the Disciples at Emmaus for a long time before they recognized Him, and the Apostles were certainly not overhasty in crediting the Resurrection, for they refused to believe the testimony of the women and that of the two Disciples, and were not convinced until their Master came to them through closed doors, stood in their midst and showed them His hands and His side. Had Christ not risen, and had His appearance been altogether the result of imagination, how could Peter have found in the sepulchre only the linen cloths in which the body was wrapped and not the body itself? St. Peter's visit to the tomb supplies us with conclusive evidence that our Lord's body had not been hastily removed, but had risen again in power.

(c) Equally conclusive evidence is furnished by His intercourse with His Disciples, with whom He associated for forty days, working miracles, eating and drinking with them, and speaking to them about the Kingdom of God. Once He was seen by 500 people together. The Apostles were so firmly convinced of the reality of the Resurrection, that they went all over the world preaching Christ Crucified and Risen, and rather than deny what they knew to be the truth, they underwent hardships and most cruel persecutions, and died as martyrs.

Christ really rose again with the same body that had been scourged, and nailed to the Cross, and buried by Joseph of Arimathea. It was this very body that came forth from the sepulchre at the Resurrection, but it had ceased to be earthly and capable of suffering, and was glorified and resplendent. It was not to a select few that our Lord appeared; He bade His Disciples meet Him in Galilee, and there was with them for several weeks. He did not

die a second time after the Resurrection. "Christ dieth no more," says the Apostle, "death hath no more dominion over him, for in that he died to sin, he dieth once, but in that he liveth, he liveth unto God." How few Christians resemble Him in this respect! They tear themselves away from their evil inclinations and besetting sins, but only for a time. As soon as temptation assails them and the occasion to sin is present, they are overcome and fall back into evil, and into the grave whence they had risen. To them life is a continual alternation of life and death, and their conversion is no real Resurrection. Yet how easily might they make their conversion permanent and their Resurrection a reality, if they would but consider the advantages of life and grace and the disadvantages of death and sin! They would then find courage and strength to resist the frailty of nature and the force of temptation, for they would see that grace is the way of everlasting life, and sin is that of death. Therefore, if we Christians desire to arise from our sins, even as Jesus Christ arose from the grave, our conversion must be real, unmistakable and permanent. Amen.

41. The Ascension

After His Resurrection our Lord spent forty days on earth, and was often with His Disciples, instructing them on the chief means of promoting the salvation of all who believed in Him. He spoke much about the Kingdom of God, to found which He had come into the world. Finally the day arrived for His return to His Father in Heaven, and He led his Disciples out "as far as Bethania, and lifting up his hands, he blessed them; and it came to pass, whilst he blessed them, he departed from them and was carried up to Heaven. And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (Luke, xxiv, 50-52).

Jesus ascended into Heaven as conqueror of death and hell, to enter into possession of the glory that is His due, to act as our mediator and advocate with the Father, to send the promised Holy Spirit to His Disciples, and to open Heaven to mankind. There is a dwelling prepared for us in our Heavenly home, because our Lord assumed our human nature.

(a) He was truly man, with a really human body, soul and intellect. He possessed all the faculties of a man, and united this true, personal humanity with His true, personal divinity, in the same way as in man body and soul are united, but not intermingled or confused. Christ was as perfectly human as Adam was human.

(b) It was as God and man that Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, not only as God. He took flesh and blood from the Virgin Mary, and as man He was born, as man He lived on earth, eating and drinking, as man He suffered, died and rose again, and as man, too, He ascended into Heaven, where He sat down as man at the right hand of God. Thus the founder of the new race is now in Heaven.

(c) In Christ all the redeemed are already united with God in Heaven, for He is the first of their line; Heaven stands open to us all, for the branches necessarily share the lot of the vine, and where the head is, there are the members. Just as the first Adam dragged us all down to share his fate, sorrows and death, so does the second Adam raise us to share His happiness, life and immortality. Paradise is given back to us, and our Lord Himself has told us that in His Father's house are many mansions, and that He has gone to prepare a place for us.

But, though the gates of Heaven are open, we shall enter only if we put on Christ's nature.

(a) By means of Baptism, Faith and Holy Communion we are

grafted into His nature both in body and soul, but we may be sickly members, having no permanent participation in His glory, for such will be cut off and thrown away as worthless.

(b) We must put on the nature of Christ if we are to share His happiness, and we must become like Him humble and obedient, looking at things from His point of view, resembling Him in our thoughts and desires, and loving God and our neighbor as He loves them. Moreover, it behooves us to mortify our worldly passions and inclinations, and to seek Heavenly things, since we have to live, as He lived, in chastity and purity. We ought to be charitable, gentle, just, peaceable and merciful, and, like Him, we must suffer, for it is only through many tribulations that we can enter the Kingdom of Heaven, and even Christ had to suffer before He entered into His glory. He wishes us to share both His sufferings and His glory, and to become like Him. Man must put on Christ, just as Christ put on man; and it should be our aim to be transformed into His likeness. There must be some resemblance between things if they are ever to be united.

My brethren, let us even now dwell with Christ in Heaven, turning our thoughts and desires thither; let us make it our chief aim to reach our Heavenly home, and never sacrifice it in order to enjoy the riches, honors and pleasures of this world. Let us dread nothing so much as to forfeit our right to Heaven, and bear with patience all the trials of life, knowing that happiness is in store for us. In short, let us live, suffer and die with Jesus, that we may also dwell with Him in glory.

42. The Last Judgment

"And immediately after the tribulation of those days, the sun shall be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the

stars shall fall from Heaven, and the powers of Heaven shall be moved; and then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven, and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn; and they shall see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of Heaven with much power and majesty. And he shall send his angels with a trumpet and a great voice, and they shall gather together his elect" (Matt., xxiv, 29-31). "And all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats. And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on his left . . . and these shall go into everlasting punishment, but the just into life everlasting" (Matt., xxv, 32, 33, 46). This description may well fill us with alarm! What terror there will be when the end of the world approaches?

1. It will be terrible on account of the circumstances preceding it; the sun and moon will cease to shine, and the world will be shrouded in darkness; trumpet-blasts will announce the appearance of the Son of Man. Nothing that ever has taken place on earth is comparable with this awful scene, and yet it is only the prelude to the last judgment! No wonder if all men faint away in fear and horror on that day.

2. The end of the world will be terrible also on account of the Judge, who will then appear in power and glory, such power and glory as men have never beheld. He will no longer be the poor, simple Son of Man, full of love and compassion for all, but He who has sought us and borne so much for our sake, whom we have esteemed so lightly and trusted so little, in spite of His great miracles, and who has loved us to the end, though we preferred our fellow-creatures to Him—He will be our Judge, and we shall stand before Him, knowing that we have rejected His grace, despised His word, and been ashamed to confess Him and His Holy Church

before other men. How will He look at us? His escort will consist of angels and saints, whom we have disregarded, and whose example we have failed to follow—what will they think of us? Shall we not be overwhelmed with shame?

3. Finally the judgment will itself be terrible. All mankind, all who have ever lived, will be present, as well as all the angels and devils, and the Judge will proceed to examine every action that has ever been performed, every sin that has ever been committed. He will consider our indifference to our duties, our callousness towards our besetting sins and our presumption in time of peril. He will call us to account for the sins of others for which we are answerable, either through giving scandal, or by counselling others to do wrong, or by negligence in controlling those entrusted to our care. Parents will have to answer for their children's sins, when such sins are due to their carelessness. The Judge will investigate sins committed through culpable ignorance, secret sins, long forgotten because we have never been willing to think of them; sins for which we have discovered false and plausible excuses, and also sins of omission, where we have failed to do what was plainly required of us.

Men will be filled with dread, and everything will be revealed; God's decrees and dealings will be justified, and all our actions punished or rewarded. Innocence will be brought to light, and sin and hypocrisy unmasked, unless we have previously done Penance. When judgment is given and the fate of every individual is irrevocably settled for all eternity, those who are saved will break out into songs of joy and exultation, whilst the lost will utter curses, blasphemies and shrieks of despair. Then will be formed the new Heaven and the new earth. It is good for us, my brethren, often to think of the judgment, when the world will be destroyed, and Jesus Christ, God incarnate, will appear to judge mankind. It rests with us to

decide whether we shall look forward to that day with joy or fear. We can rejoice if we have never fallen into grievous sin, or if, having sinned, we have done penance; but we must dread the last judgment if we die with many grievous sins for which we have done no penance on our conscience. Let us beware of sin, that we may not have to fear our Judge.

43. The Holy Ghost

Hitherto I have spoken only of the First and Second Persons of the Blessed Trinity; to-day I propose to consider what the creed tells us of the Third Person, i. e., the Holy Ghost, who, with the Father and the Son, is true God, as is proved by many passages in the Bible. David prayed: "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me" (Ps., l, 13); in the Book of Wisdom (ix, 17) we read: "Who shall know thy thought, except thou give wisdom and send thy Holy Spirit from above?" and in Ecclesiasticus (i, 9): "He created her (i. e., wisdom) in the Holy Ghost." Our Lord ordered His Apostles to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost" (Matt., xxviii, 19). Our Lady conceived "by the Holy Ghost" (Matt., i, 20), and St. John sent his Disciples to Jesus, who baptized them with the Holy Ghost. The Person of the Holy Ghost is distinct from those of the Father and of the Son, for Jesus said: "I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete" (John, xiv, 16). The formula used in Baptism shows plainly that the three divine Persons are distinct, and so do the following words of St. Paul: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the charity of God, and the communication of the Holy Ghost be with you all" (2 Cor., xiii, 13). The Holy Ghost proceeds from the Father and Son, so that He is called sometimes the Spirit of the Father, sometimes the Spirit of Christ. Our Lord said to His

Apostles: "It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you" (Matt., x, 20). At the Last Supper He said: "When the Paraclete cometh, whom I will send you from the Father, the Spirit of truth, who poceedeth from the Father, he shall give testimony of me" (John, xv, 26). To the Romans St. Paul writes: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (viii, 9); and to the Galatians: "God hath sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts" (iv, 6). It is clear, therefore, that the Holy Ghost proceeds from both the Father and the Son, and like them is God, as His works testify. He participated in the creation of the universe; He spoke by the Prophets; He mysteriously overshadowed the blessed Virgin; He impelled Simeon and Anna to visit the Temple, on the occasion of our Lord's Baptism in the Jordan; He appeared in the form of a dove, and at the feast of Pentecost as parted tongues of fire, after a violent wind had shaken the house in which the Disciples were gathered together. In this last appearance He manifested His divine power in a peculiar manner, which reminds us of David's words: "Thou shalt renew the face of the earth" (Ps. ciii, 30), and of our Lord's saying: "The Spirit breatheth where he will, and thou hearest his voice" (John, iii, 8). The violent wind suggested the power whereby the Holy Ghost would overthrow the idols of this world, remove vice and frustrate evil designs against God and His Kingdom. Just as on Sinai and from the burning bush God the Father spoke out of the fire, so did the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, thus indicating that His nature resembled that of the Father; and by appearing in the form of tongues He testified to His essential likeness to the Son, for word and tongue are closely connected, and "the Word" in Holy Scripture always denotes Jesus Christ.

The coming of the Holy Ghost effected a wonderful change in

the Disciples, hitherto so cowardly and so limited in their understanding, for

(a) He enlightened their minds, so that they understood the Scripture and all that Jesus had taught them;

(b) He purified their hearts from all mean jealousy and ambition;

(c) He inspired them with ardent love of God and man;

(d) He strengthened them, so that they fearlessly preached Christ crucified and risen again before the Council and all Jerusalem, rejoicing if they had to suffer shame for His sake; thenceforth nothing could alarm them.

(e) He imparted to them miraculously power to speak in foreign tongues, to heal the sick, to cast out devils, and even to raise the dead.

The Holy Ghost made and still makes His influence felt upon the Apostles and bishops, who are their successors, but He works in us also, making us holy by His grace, and helping us to be good and to please God, so that we may become the children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. Sanctifying grace is the most beautiful adornment that our souls can possess, it is their very life, and without it we can do nothing good or meritorious. Hence St. Paul says of the just, who are adorned with this grace, that they are temples of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in them (1 Cor., iii, 16). We all receive sanctifying grace at our Baptism, when, St. Paul tells us, we are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God. As soon as we commit a mortal sin, we lose this divine grace, for we cease to be well-pleasing to God, and the Holy Ghost leaves us, so that we forfeit all claim to Heaven and eternal happiness. No greater misfortune than this could befall us, but God in His mercy has furnished us with means

of recovering His grace, for when we truly repent, worthily receive the Sacraments, and love God with all our heart, we are justified and restored to His favor.

Apart from the sanctifying grace that we receive in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance, the Holy Ghost gives us actual grace to enlighten our understanding, so that we are able to recognize the truths of faith, and perceive the good that we should do, and the evil that we should avoid. Moreover, actual grace inclines our will to good, and strengthens it to overcome hindrances. We need God's grace if we are to have faith, hope and charity, if we are to persevere to the end and accomplish any good works, for we are not "sufficient to think anything of ourselves, as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God" (2 Cor., iii, 5). Our inability to do right is a result of original sin that has been transmitted to us all from our first parents; but in His infinite goodness and for the sake of Christ's merits, God bestows upon us actual grace, if we ask Him for it. It behooves us, however, to cooperate with it by watchfulness, by resisting temptations and avoiding dangers, and by doing our best to use and not to bury our talents.

I have shown you who the Holy Ghost is, and how many benefits we owe to Him, the Third Person of the Blessed Trinity, since He not only assisted at the creation of the world, but by sanctifying it completes its redemption. It was owing to the inspiration of the Holy Ghost that the Apostles became wise and bold enough to proclaim God's word, to administer the Sacraments and to found a Church, which will maintain true faith, firm hope and ardent charity to the consummation of the world. Let us never cease thanking God the Holy Ghost for all these benefits.

44. The Gifts and Fruits of the Holy Ghost

The work of the Holy Ghost is not limited to the Apostles and their successors, the bishops, but extends to us all, enlightening us so that we may perceive the truths of faith and the beauty of virtue, and encouraging us to desire and do what is right. The Holy Ghost bestows upon us various gifts, which Isaias enumerates as follows (xi, 2, 3): 1. Wisdom, 2. Understanding, 3. Counsel, 4. Fortitude, 5. Knowledge, 6. Piety, 7. Fear of the Lord.

1. The gift of wisdom enables us to know God, and, as a result of knowing Him, to love and fear Him. A truly wise man esteems the things of Heaven far above those of earth, and has a relish for all that savors of God. Worldlings cannot understand this, as they appreciate what is temporal more than what is eternal, and are afraid to devote any attention to higher things, lest they should thereby diminish their prosperity in this life.

2. The gift of understanding enables us to comprehend the doctrines of our faith, and one who possesses this gift will lose no opportunity of gaining still further enlightenment and knowledge regarding the truths of his religion.

3. The gift of counsel enables us to help ourselves and others in difficulties. Those who are set over others have peculiar need of this gift, and can effect much good by its means. It is of great importance when we have to make any weighty decision, as, for instance, when a man has to decide whether it is better for him to marry or to be a priest. Every one ought to pray earnestly for this gift, as his whole happiness or misery may depend upon his possession of it.

4. The gift of fortitude enables us to endure all adversity and

overcome all hindrances to our practice of virtue. All the saints possess this gift, for their faith is so strong that nothing seems to them too hard or impossible of accomplishment.

5. The gift of knowledge enables us to know ourselves; to see what we ought to do, and faithfully to perform our duties. This is the best and most profitable knowledge that any man can acquire, and the possession of it will make his life happy.

6. The gift of piety stimulates us to offer up all our actions to God, and to do everything with a pure intention. St. Ignatius of Loyola was so full of this gift that his habitual remark was: "May all be for the greater glory of God!"

7. Finally, the gift of holy fear makes us dread God's displeasure and the just punishment for sin more than anything else in the world. Hence many have suffered loss, tortures and death, rather than commit even a small sin.

St. Paul tells us what glorious fruits are produced by these gifts (Gal., v, 22, 23). The chief fruits of the Holy Ghost are twelve in number, viz.: charity, joy, peace, patience, benignity, goodness, longanimity, mildness, faith, modesty, continency and chastity.

1. Only those endowed by the Holy Ghost can practise true charity towards God and Man, for they alone know God in all His perfection and value Him as their highest good. From pure love of Him they love their neighbors also, regarding them as fellow-creatures and brethren, since God is the Father of all mankind.

2. The Holy Ghost imparts true joy to men, because nothing affords truer pleasure than the ability to serve God and their fellowmen. This joy lasts on into eternity, and is not limited to the present life.

3. Those on whom the Holy Spirit bestows His gifts are never quarrelsome, but live in peace with all men. They are contented to

be overlooked and make many sacrifices for the sake of peace, and they do their utmost to induce others to be peaceable.

4. They are invariably patient. Think of the Holy Apostles! They were continually misjudged, and when they tried to do good they received no thanks, but ingratitude, scorn and bitter hatred. They endured abuse, rough treatment and even death in a most painful form, but they were always patient and steadfast.

5. Benignity is another beautiful fruit of the Holy Ghost. The Apostle St. John possessed this quality in a very high degree, for he always spoke and acted with gentleness and composure.

6. Goodness characterizes those who have received the gifts of the Holy Ghost; they wish well to all, are grateful for every kindness and are full of compassion towards all who are in trouble.

7. They are not easily disturbed, but are forbearing and considerate in their dealings with others. They display no bad temper when they are wronged, but by their longanimity they soothe the anger and resentment of others. They are peacemakers, never causing strife and quarrels, but putting an end to them.

8. They are always ready to follow our Lord's example of mildness, prefering to suffer rather than inflict an injury, and hoping thus to gain the reward promised by Christ to the meek.

9. They are faithful and honest in word and deed; they keep their promises and hate lying and dishonesty; hence all men are disposed to trust them, for they do not break their word.

10. They are modest and temperate, both in their enjoyments and in the expression of their passions. Thus they avoid many trials and preserve a good character among their neighbors.

11. They are continent, allowing no evil craving to make them indulge in forbidden and sinful acts. They keep watch over their eyes, ears, tongue and other members, lest they should do what is

wrong. They mortify their senses and chastise their bodies, in order thus to preserve their continency, knowing that it was in this way that the saints overcame the world, the flesh and the devil.

12. Finally they observe the strictest chastity, regarding themselves as temples of the Holy Ghost. There is no place for impurity in a man within whom the Holy Ghost dwells; he will not allow an unseemly thought to arise in his heart, far less will he utter an indecent word, or be guilty of a shameful action. We are strong enough to lead chaste lives if only we bear God in our hearts, and keep Him constantly before our eyes.

Such are the glorious fruits produced by the gifts of the Holy Ghost. They ought to make us eager to possess these divine gifts, which result in such priceless benefits. Let us earnestly pray that the Holy Spirit may confer them upon us, and let us do our best to use them in the right way. O Holy Spirit, give us Thy gifts and graces! Amen.

45. The Foundation and Constitution of the Church

In the ninth article of the creed we acknowledge our belief in one Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints. Let us to-day consider what we mean by the Church, how she came into being and how she is still preserved.

The Apostles, after receiving the Holy Ghost at Pentecost, went forth into all the world to preach and baptize. They gathered together communities of the faithful in many places, as we read in the Acts and Epistles, and each such community of Christians was originally presided over by one of the Apostles, who gave it laws and regulations and administered justice. When such communities became more numerous, the Apostles consecrated bishops to direct them, instructing these bishops how, in their turn, they were to con-

secrate and appoint others. All these communities were closely connected with one another, for they professed the same faith, partook of the same sacraments, and formed collectively one great community subject to a common head—St. Peter. This great community is the Catholic Church. Our Lord Himself founded the Church, for He taught men how to know and worship God, and confirmed the truth of His doctrine by means of miracles, prophecies and even by His death. After preparing the faithful by His instructions, He instituted the sacraments, and in order that His teaching and the administration of the sacraments should be perpetuated in every age, He instituted also the teaching office in His Church, *i. e.*, the priesthood and episcopate.

1. Jesus Christ Himself instituted the teaching office. At the very beginning of His public ministry He chose twelve men to witness His deeds, and to testify to them after His departure from the world. He bade them go forth and preach the gospel to every creature, teaching them to observe all things that He had commanded. In addition to the twelve He selected 72 others, who were to go two and two into every town and village that He intended to visit, and He promised His perpetual help to those who fearlessly preached His doctrines.

2. Our Lord instituted the priesthood also, for He gave His Apostles power and authority to baptize all nations in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Gost. In obedience to the words: "Do this for a commemoration of me," they had frequently to offer the holy sacrifice of the Mass, and by breathing on them (John, xx, 22) Christ gave them power to forgive sins and to administer the other sacraments. Thus the priesthood was instituted.

3. For the due government of the teachers and priests of the

Christian Church, our Lord appointed the Apostles and their successors to be rulers or bishops; St. Peter was the supreme head, with authority over the rest, in order that discipline and unity should be preserved. His peculiar powers were conferred upon him in the words: "Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to thee the keys of the kingdom of Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven, and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven." "Feed my sheep, feed my lambs."

The Church is here compared with a building set upon a rock, and strong enough to resist the most violent storms. Our Lord called the Apostle Simon "Peter," the rock, and made him the foundation-stone of the Church. All the walls, *i. e.*, all the members of the Church were to be connected with this foundation, that they might have permanence and strength to triumph over the gates of hell, *i. e.*, the enemies of Holy Church. The keys of the kingdom of Heaven, entrusted to Peter, represent the supreme power in the Church, whilst authority to bind and to loose represents power to legislate. The lambs and sheep are the faithful, some of whom are taught, and some are teachers. The word "feed" signifies "govern."

St. Peter exercised his supreme authority when St. Matthias was chosen to be an Apostle, and also at Pentecost, when he stood up and spoke first. When the dispute arose regarding the observance of the Mosaic law, St. Peter decided that Gentiles were admissible to the Church.

Because Jesus intended His Church to be a permanent institution, the threefold office of the Apostles was necessarily passed on by them to their successors, the bishops, who were appointed in every town containing a Christian community, to be teachers, priests and

rulers. The Apostles appointed and consecrated the bishops, who are therefore their lawful successors. As, however, it was impossible in large communities for the bishop personally to discharge all these functions, they appointed priests or elders to help them in exercising their teaching and priestly offices. As a rule men of mature years were selected for this purpose, and hence they were called elders. The supremacy over the whole Church was transmitted by St. Peter to his successors, the bishops of Rome. There are now in the Catholic Church priests or pastors, who preach the word of God and administer the sacraments, bishops, who govern the dioceses assigned to them, and one supreme ruler, who with the other bishops governs the whole Church; viz., the Roman pontiff, the father of all the faithful, St. Peter's successor.

Heavy obligations are laid upon the rulers of the Church.

1. They are bound to look after the spiritual welfare of the faithful, and to do their utmost to promote the growth of the true Faith, and the increase of piety and virtue.

2. They must direct and control the clergy, so that the latter may exercise their holy office, according to the rules of the Church, for the glory of God and the salvation of men, edifying those committed to their charge both by their words and example.

3. They must always be on the watch against false doctrine, striving by every means to preserve our Lord's teaching in all its purity, and they must provide for the instruction of the faithful in accordance with the spirit of the Church, to prevent the spread of error. Bishops are required to offer most vigorous resistance to all heresies.

4. Finally, in virtue of possessing authority to bind and to loose, bishops may proceed against rebellious subordinates, and expel them from the community of the faithful, *i. e.*, pronounce sentence of excommunication.

Such is the organization of the Church, which our Lord founded on the rock, and which nothing can overthrow. He promised that she should enjoy for ever the assistance of the Blessed Trinity, and that is why St. Paul speaks of her as the pillar and ground of the truth.

Ought we not to be glad that we are members of the Church founded by God's own Son and destined to be upheld by Him as long as the world lasts? Our Church has already stood firm for nearly 2000 years. Although Jesus no longer governs her in person, we have His representative still with us, who rules the whole Catholic Church with His authority and in His name. Our Holy Father the Pope is the Vicar or representative of Christ, and just as in the primitive Church all the faithful honored and obeyed Peter, as the successor of Christ, so must we honor and obey the Pope, for the same reason. We are bound to respect also all bishops and priests, and to pay ready obedience to those who are set over us. We know what heavy obligations rest upon them for our good; without them the true faith would not be preserved, nor could we receive the sacraments. Let us thank God for His holy institutions, and show our gratitude by being faithful, loyal and respectful towards those whom He has appointed to rule over the Holy Catholic Church. Amen.

46. The Marks of the True Church

Christ founded only *one* Church, taught only *one* faith, and instituted only *one* Baptism and *one* teaching office for all the nations of the world. The Church has four marks by which she is known; she is *one,* she is *holy,* she is *Catholic,* and she is *Apostolic.*

1. She is *one* in a twofold manner, for she stands alone, since there is no other Church, and she is united and perfectly one in her-

self. There is but one God, one Saviour, Jesus Christ, one human race descended from one common ancestor, a race that is one in having sinned and one in being redeemed, one in its need of atonement and one in sanctification. There is but one divine truth, which all should accept; one divine will, which all should obey, one revelation whereby God had made known to us His will and His truth, one Holy Ghost, sent down to mankind, one grace to enlighten and strengthen all men and one eternal happiness, which all are called to enjoy. Hence there can be but one Holy Church, at one with herself, in and through whom the one truth, the one law, and the one grace of Christ are conveyed to all mankind. Unity is the first and chief mark of the true Church. In the last night of His life our Saviour prayed to His Heavenly Father, saying: "Not for them (the Apostles) only do I pray, but for them also who through their word shall believe in me, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee; that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that Thou hast sent me. And the glory which Thou hast given me, I have given to them, that they may be one, as we also are one; I in them, and Thou in me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that Thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast also loved me" (John, xvii, 20-23). In these words the unity of the faithful is mentioned as the greatest proof of the divinity of Christ and His work. The object of the Incarnation was to unite man with God, in and through Him, the God-Man, and also to unite all men with one another. In compliance with this intention, the Holy Ghost at Pentecost united the faithful in one indissoluble bond, and the immediate result of the coming of the Holy Spirit was that they were all of one heart and one soul. This unity originated in God, from whom they had received Baptism and the other means of salvation. The unity of

the Church is her most striking feature; there is complete uniformity in faith, religious worship, sacraments, laws and government. Consequently we may rest assured that she is the one true Church, and we may confidently accept all her doctrines. She supplies us with the best means of serving God and working out our own salvation, and within her fold we may safely live and die, because she is governed by Christ's Vicar on earth, and by his lawfully appointed bishops.

2. The second mark of the Church is her Catholicity. The word Catholic occurs in the Apostles' creed, and seems to have been in use from the beginning, for we find it in a remarkable passage in an epistle addressed by St. Ignatius of Antioch to the people of Smyrna. He writes: "Wherever the Catholic Church is, there is Christ." Henceforth this has been the name of the true Church; all religious sects have special names of their own, often derived from that of their founder, and so early a writer as St. Jerome remarks: "Whenever you hear of Christians whose name is not derived from Christ, but from some other founder, you may be sure that they do not belong to the Church of Christ."

The Church is Catholic inasmuch as she embraces all countries and nations in every age.

a. In accordance with the Old Testament prophecies that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed, and that the kingdom of the Messias should be worldwide, "Jesus commissioned His Apostles to go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, and teaching them to observe all things whatsoever He had commanded them." In obedience to these instructions the Apostles dispersed and went to various nations, desiring to gather all into one flock, that there might be one flock and one Shepherd. To deny the Catho-

licity of the Church is equivalent to a denial of the whole essence of Christianity and of Christ as the Redeemer of the world. National Churches are quite opposed to the spirit of Christianity, since a national religion is possible only where there are national deities. We may, it is true, speak of the Church in France, the Church in England, etc., but we do not mean that these are distinct churches; in every case it is the Catholic Church in some particular country, and the various dioceses in that country form a province of the universal Church, the unity of which is by no means affected thereby.

b. The commission given to the Apostles and their successors is valid to the end of the world, and the Holy Ghost will never forsake the Church. Moreover according to all Messianic prophecies permanence is the essential characteristic of Christ's kingdom, and the Church will never change in her constitution, doctrines or sacraments. Permanence does not preclude development, which involves no radical change. The older and greater the Church, the greater must have been the development of her constitution and cultus. Religious orders have been multiplied, ecclesiastical offices have been defined, and additional ceremonies have enhanced the dignity of her worship, but nevertheless there has been no change in the Christianity that she inherited from the primitive Church.

3. The unity and catholicity of the Church are guaranteed by her Apostolicity; she was founded upon Peter and the other Apostles, and no Church is true that has not one supreme head and bishops going back in an unbroken line to Peter and his fellow-Apostles, whose descendants they are by virtue of the Sacrament of Holy Order. To this Church alone was the promise of infallibility given, and she alone possesses the grace and doctrine given by Christ to the Apostles. Her unity and catholicity depend on the fact that all over the world all Catholic Christians are in complete accord with

their bishops, and the bishops with the Pope. Moreover each bishop teaches the same doctrine as his predecessors, and each Pope agrees with all who have gone before him, back to St. Peter himself. The primacy of Peter, continued in the primacy of the bishops of Rome, is the foundation of the unity and catholicity of the Church, which is essentially Roman, because St. Peter was bishop of Rome, and in and through him the Church is one, Catholic and above all Apostolic. The Apostles were Apostles in virtue of their connection with Peter, and in the same way bishops are lawful bishops only in virtue of their union with Peter's successor in Rome. The Roman Church takes precedence over all others, and alone of all is able to trace her descent without a break from the Apostles.

4. The fourth mark of the Church is sanctity; she is holy in her origin, her aims and the means she employs to attain it, and she reveals her sanctity in her fruits. God in Christ is the Founder of the Church, hence she must needs be holy; and just as she can trace back her origin to Christ, so may she ascribe to Him, and to the Holy Spirit sent by Him, her continued existence. Her final aim is the sanctification and salvation of the human race, and all that she does, teaches and orders are means most wise and efficacious for the attainment of this end. As to her doctrine—she insists upon the freedom of the human will as the condition underlying all morality, and also upon man's dependence on God and His grace, and she teaches her children to be humble and pray as if everything depended upon God, and, on the other hand, to exert themselves and cooperate readily with God's grace, as if everything depended upon their own efforts. She reveals God's justice, which requires of man unconditional obedience, and she teaches that it is not impossible to keep the commandments. She sets before us the love of God as our highest motive, and likeness to Christ as our moral ideal. She calls

selfishness the root of all evil, and bids us combat it in every form, and suppress it by resisting pride, by self-denial, by contempt of temporal possessions and by mortification of all fleshly lusts and disorderly desires.

She does not only teach us the highest and purest morality, but supplies us with strength to practise it, through the seven sacraments that embrace and sanctify the whole of human life. By her discipline she seeks to maintain the sanctity that she inculcates, and that the sacraments give us the grace to practise, and she stoops to the level of the most ignorant and barbarous of her children, while at the same time she urges the perfect to aim at greater perfection. Above all she displays wonderful activity in founding institutions intended to instruct and sanctify.

In every age the Catholic Church has proved to be the means of sanctifying all who accept her doctrines and guidance, and make use of her sacraments, and she has always produced in rich abundance the fairest fruits of sanctity. Therefore she has converted the world and extirpated paganism with all its horrors. The best evidence of the sanctity of the Church is afforded by the saints, men and women who have attained to a peculiarly high degree of virtue and have led a supernatural life. There have always been saints in the Church, but they abound more especially in times of persecution, heresy and corruption, when there are invariably saints who labor to counteract the evils of the age in which they live. Thus during the fearful persecutions in the first three centuries, countless martyrs died for their faith, and in the following period there were great doctors who combated the prevalent heresies, and won back to the faith many who had been led astray. The so-called Reformation threatened to destroy the Catholic Church, until multitudes of saints demonstrated most plainly her sanctity and divine strength.

We have great cause to rejoice that our Church is holy in her origin, having been founded by the Son of God, and that she can sanctify her members, if only they obey her and faithfully use her means of grace. Who would not wish to belong to this Church? and who would not exert himself to the utmost to be a worthy member of her, holy, like her divine Founder and all the saints? Let us thank God that we belong to the one, holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church, and strive to live and die worthily of her, that we may be holy and happy both here and hereafter. Amen.

47. The Church's Mission on Earth

Hitherto we have been considering the nature and aims of the Church, and today we have to discuss her two chief attributes, which are necessary consequences of the features that we have already examined, and which arouse the greatest antagonism among her enemies, just as Christ was a "stumbling-stone and rock of scandal," because He declared Himself to be the Son of God, and the one sole way of salvation. The two attributes of the Church to which I refer are that she is infallible and that in her alone salvation is to be found.

That the Church is infallible follows from her immutability, her whole mission, the divinity of Jesus Christ and the continuous assistance of the Holy Ghost. Since Christ founded a religion for all mankind in every age, He must have provided means whereby this religion could be brought home to all, without error or corruption. The Catholic Church is the means whereby this is effected. When we call her infallible, we mean that she always knows with certainty what was revealed to her by Christ as the truth, and therefore she can never err. She is infallible also because she is one and Catholic, in accordance with the principle: "What has always and every-

where been believed, is Catholic doctrine." Her infallibility centres in the Pope, as the head of the teaching Church, for Pope and Church are inseparable, he is her supreme head and foundation, and hence all the Fathers agree in saying that Rome, being the vital centre of the Church, never has deviated and never can deviate from the truth. The preservation of the Church from all error is due to the abiding presence of the Holy Ghost and to the action of divine Providence. From the infallibility of the Church it follows that she possesses absolute authority, derived from Christ Himself, who said to the Apostles: "He that heareth you, heareth me." This is the Catholic principle of authority, a necessary result of the revelation made by God to man, for since He has made a revelation, He must have instituted a teaching body to preserve this revelation intact. No one is a Catholic who does not submit unconditionally to the authority of the Church, and does not believe all that she pronounces to be divinely revealed truth. We have to believe what the Church teaches, because she teaches it, and because Christ has ordered us to hear her. Submission to the authority of the Church does not involve any lack of freedom or any intellectual bondage; it is, on the contrary, an act of conviction and a manifestation of free-will. Obedience to divine truth is true intellectual liberty, and no antagonism is possible between divine truth and human intelligence; they are always in most perfect accord, and it is most reasonable to bow to the authority of the Church in matters of religion. Whoever refuses to do so, has to obey men rather than God. After the Protestants had renounced their allegiance to the Catholic Church, they were subject to the authority of individuals or of the secular government.

Salvation is to be found nowhere but in the Catholic Church, because she alone guards the truth and grace of Christ, without

which no one can be saved. "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be condemned." Christ alone can deliver men from sin and condemnation; no one can save himself, but Christ communicates saving grace to individuals in and through the Church, which He founded for this very purpose. Therefore, none can deny the doctrines of the Church without at the same time declaring that salvation is possible without Christ, or that the Church is not the one universal guardian of His truth and grace. Hence the doctrine that outside the Church there is no salvation is as old as Christianity itself. Irenaeus says: "God will judge all who are outside the truth, *i. e.*, the Church." Cyprian writes: "No one can have God as his Father, unless the Church is his mother." Origen says that to leave the Church is a sin which even blood cannot blot out. "Let no one," he adds, "deceive himself; outside the Church no man is saved." Chrysostom writes very explicitly: "We know that in the Church alone there is salvation, and that outside the Catholic Church and her faith no one can take part in Christ, nor be sure of his salvation." St. Augustine's works abound in similar expressions. In one place he says: "Outside the Church one can possess everything except salvation. A man may have honor, the sacrament, the Gospel, and he may even preach in the name of God, but nowhere save in the Catholic Church can he find salvation." At the synod of Cyrta the following decision was made: 'Whoever is cut off from the Catholic Church, though he may fancy himself to lead a praiseworthy life, will forfeit life eternal as a penalty for the sin of separating from the unity of Christ, and will incur God's wrath." All the Fathers of the Church teach the same doctrine, and it is stated plainly in the Athanasian Creed, which begins with the words: "Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the Catholic faith; which faith

except every one do keep entire and inviolate, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly." Salvation is possible only through Christ's redeeming grace, and none can participate in this grace except through the Church, who alone preserves Christ's teaching and commandments inviolate, and alone bestows His grace on individuals. She is the body of which Christ is the Head, and none can share the benefits of the Head without being a member of the body. We come to God through Christ, and to Christ through the Church. This is the order established by God, and whoever rejects it through pride and audacity, excludes himself from the way of salvation, and his resistance to God's ordinance and his contempt of the Church are sins certain to shut him out of the kingdom of Heaven. Therefore whoever commits these sins, is lost; and, as our Lord said, he that believeth not shall be condemned: in other words, he that will not submit to the scheme of salvation revealed to us by God in Christ and His Church, and devised for the salvation of all men—that man will incur the sentence of final condemnation. All this results necessarily from the fact that God and the truth are one and unchanging. God cannot tolerate the worship of idols, nor can Christ countenance false prophets, and in the same way the Church, being the one universal means of salvation, must stand alone in this respect.

"Outside the Church there is no salvation, because apart from Christ salvation is impossible, and apart from the Church there is no Christ." This seems to many a very hard saying, because they completely misunderstand it, and deduce from it the false conclusion that all are condemned who are not visible members of the Catholic Church. This deduction is quite erroneous, and has never been sanctioned by the Church, who has always taught that those who are outside the Church by their own fault, who have wickedly

rejected the truth and grace offered them, exclude themselves from salvation. Those, however, who by no fault of their own are not in visible communion with the Church, and who perhaps even know nothing of Christ, can nevertheless be saved, if they earnestly do their best to obey God as far as they know His commandments. While such persons do not outwardly belong to the Church, they do so inwardly, in spirit and disposition. The Church never decides whether any one fails to belong to her through his own fault or not; in fact, she sternly forbids any of her children to pronounce judgment on others, and repeats to all the words: "Judge not, that ye be not judged." She impresses upon us God's mercy and justice, and urges us to be honest and charitable in all our dealings with infidels and heretics, to pray for them and to do our best to bring them to the knowledge of the truth. Thus she unites fervent belief in her own truth, divinity and necessity with charity towards the erring. In the Church alone is salvation, yet not all are saved who outwardly belong to her. Paganism, Judaism and heresy are not ways of salvation, and yet many pagans, Jews and heretics are not condemned. Though she rejects their errors, she does not condemn the erring, but trusts that God in His mercy will save them. Let us, my brethren, thank God that we belong to His infallible Church. We can always rely upon her; let us joyfully obey her, and then we may hope that, having lived in union with her, we are in union also with Christ, and thus shall attain the glorious end which Christ had in view for us when He founded His Church on earth. Amen.

48. The Communion of Saints

By the Communion of Saints we mean the union under a common head of all the faithful, whether here on earth, or already in Heaven, or detained in Purgatory.

a. We who became members of the Church at Baptism, and are thus children of God, form one great community. In civil life, the citizens are not all independent one of another, but are united into one civic body, and the same holds good in the spiritual life, where we are all united in God's Kingdom, the Church. Every prince has need of his subjects, and subjects have need of rulers. So our spiritual rulers are set over us, and are necessary for our welfare, as they have to uphold and govern the Church. Just as the members of the body have various functions and do not exist each for its own sake, but for the benefit of the whole body, so we may all have different pursuits and functions, and yet form one body, as St. Paul says: "As the body is one, and hath many members, so . . . in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Gentiles, whether bond or free; and in one Spirit we have all been made to drink" (1 Cor., xii, 12, 13). Our Heavenly Father looks upon the human race as one; He beheld all mankind in Adam, and now in Christ He sees all who are redeemed forming, as it were, a holy community, being the members whose Head is Christ. These constitute the Church, God's Kingdom on earth, and St. Paul says of them that He has translated them into the kingdom of the Son of His love (Col., i, 13).

b. The Communion of Saints extends far beyond the limits of this world. We are apt to think of the next world as quite distinct from ours, but we are mistaken. The Church is in touch both with things temporal and things eternal, so that she connects Heaven and earth, and whoever is once a member of her body, belongs to her

forever. Death removes him from his earthly home, but not from the Kingdom of God, in which we are all united, and if he has once entered the fold of the redeemed, he continues to belong to it, unless he voluntarily forsakes it by sin. Look up beyond the narrow limits of this world! The holy souls who inhabit the heavenly Jerusalem are our brothers and sisters; they are not cut off from us, but are the glorified members of the body whose militant members we are.

c. Look down also into the abodes of suffering, where many of those dear to us are detained, longing for the hour of their release. They, too, are citizens of the same kingdom, and members of our communion, and although they may be stained with many sins, they departed in the state of grace, and belong to the number of the redeemed. If it were otherwise, how could they be on the way to their heavenly home, drawing day by day nearer to the Lord whom they love?

It is a comforting thought that the departed are still ours; we know that they have passed away, but they are still members of the same Church, suffering members of the body whose militant members we are.

All Christ's merits, won by His incarnation, passion and death, belong to those who are His. Just as the grapes derive their juice from the same vine, so do we all derive our life from Him, as long as we are in communion with Him. His sacrifice, sacraments, blessings, and doctrine are intended for us all, whether we are rich or poor, learned or ignorant. We are all fed with the same Bread, redeemed by the same sacrifice, instructed in the same doctrine and most intimately united one with another. This is but natural, for it is inconceivable that the body should suffer unless all the members suffer with it. A member does not derive its life exclusively from the head, but from all the other members also, and each member fur-

nishes strength to all the rest, and if it is sickly, all the rest share its sickness. When one member of the Church does anything good and meritorious, all the other members rejoice and participate in its merits. All good works, *e. g.*, prayers, sacrifices, mortifications, alms-giving, etc., form a common treasure, in which each shares who belongs to our Lord's mystical body. But this is not all, for as we are in communion not only with the living on earth, but also with the saints in Heaven, we share their blessings and benefits. As we are united in one body with them, their glory and honor are imparted to the whole Church, and we enjoy their love, care and sympathy. We have often felt that our patron saints take an interest in us, and realize our troubles and necessities; moreover they act as our intercessors, and the Church encourages us to invoke them. We have it in our power to help the suffering members of the Church in very much the same way as the saints help us. The souls in purgatory still participate in all the riches and life of the Church, and whatever affects her, affects them also. Hence not a single Mass is offered and not a single good work performed, without their benefiting thereby. They profit by our prayers, mortifications, fasting and almsdeeds, which serve to deliver them from purgatory, or at least tend to hasten the day of their release.

This doctrine is full of consolation; we should not mourn our dead with hopeless sorrow, since we can assist them in many ways; and when they, by our help, have entered into the joy of their Lord, they will remember us and show their gratitude by praying that we, too, may enjoy eternal bliss. Let us strive to be living members of the Church, doing our best to help the departed, and to revere and invoke the saints in Heaven. These practices will make life and death easier for us, since everywhere we shall find brethren, ready to welcome and rejoice with us.

49. The Forgiveness of Sins

By the tenth article of the Creed is meant that in the true Church the remission of sins effected by Christ still continues, and that the priests of the Church have power to pronounce forgiveness. When sin is forgiven, the spirit of grace overcomes all hostility to God in the soul, and restores the sinner to God's favor. When he confesses his sin, he lays aside his wickedness, and when he receives absolution he is brought back to friendship with God. At Baptism all sin, both original and actual, is remitted, as well as all the punishment due to sin. Baptism does not, however, deliver us from our natural frailty; on the contrary, each of us has to struggle continually against temptation and the cravings of concupiscence, and there is hardly one person who withstands them so stoutly as to remain untainted by sin. Hence authority had to be given to the Church for the forgiveness of sins committed after Baptism, and there is no doubt that our Lord gave this power to the Apostles. We read in St. Matthew, xvi, 19, that He said to Peter: "I will give to thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind upon earth, it shall be bound also in Heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose upon earth, it shall be loosed also in Heaven." St. John, too, tells us that after breathing on the Apostles, Our Lord said to them: "Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them, and whose sins you shall retain, they are retained" (John xx, 23). The power of forgiveness is not limited to certain sins, but every sin, no matter how great, can be forgiven, provided that the sinner really purposes amendment. When St. Peter asked how often sinners were to be forgiven, and suggested seven times as the limit, our Saviour replied: "Not seven times, but seventy times seven times" (Matt., xviii, 22). This Divine power was not, however, con-

ferred upon all the disciples, but only upon the bishops and priests, who alone can exercise it. Sins are forgiven in the Sacraments of Baptism and Penance; hence both priests and Sacraments are, as it were, the instruments used by our Lord, the Author and Giver of salvation, when He pardons our sins and justifies us. It is an undeniable truth that God alone can forgive sins, and forgiveness has its source in His supreme goodness and power. In Isaias, xliii, 25, we read that God said: "I am He that can blot out thy iniquities for my own sake, and I will not remember thy sins." The forgiveness of sins resembles the remission of a debt; no one but the actual creditor can remit a payment due to him, and by our sins we have all become God's debtors, and we ask Him daily to forgive us our debts. No one can forgive sin but God alone, and before the time of Christ no human being was empowered to pronounce forgiveness in His Name. Our Divine Redeemer, being both God and man, derived His authority from His Heavenly Father. He tells us this plainly in Matt., ix, 6, where we read: "That you may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins (then said He to the man sick of the palsy), 'Arise, take up thy bed and go into thy house.'" Before His ascension into Heaven, Christ communicated this power to the bishops and priests of His Church.

It behooves us, my brethren, to remember that we have been redeemed, not with perishable gold and silver, but with the precious Blood of God's only-begotten Son. We cannot value too highly the power of forgiveness possessed by the Church, nor can we too often avail ourselves of it for our temporal and eternal good. When we are seriously ill, we appreciate the remedies prescribed for us, and we should value still more the means of salvation that God offers us; for the remedies prescribed by a physician may not effect a cure, but those supplied by God can never fail to save us. Let us

beware of making light of sin, or of being slow to repent, because we can so easily obtain forgiveness. If we think lightly of sin, we are ungrateful towards God, and unworthy of His mercy, and if we put off our repentance we may be overtaken by death, when we least expect it, and have no further opportunity of amendment. Let us resolve firmly never to be guilty either of indifference to sin or of unwillingness to do penance. Amen.

50. The End of Man, Death and Resurrection

The doctrines of Christianity do not concern the past and present only, but they draw aside the veil between us and the future, and allow us a glimpse of the life to come. Death is the portal through which we all must enter that life, as St. Paul says: "It is appointed to man once to die." Death is the separation of the soul from the body, which is the soul's habitation. When the soul departs the body decays. Christianity teaches us that death is the return of the soul to her Creator, who made her by His breath. We are reminded of this when we read of the thief dying on the Cross, who said to our Saviour: "Lord, remember me when Thou shalt come into Thy Kingdom," and received the reply: "Amen, I say to thee, this day thou shalt be with me in Paradise."

That we must die is certain; in every minute 60 people die, and in every hour 3,600. Death respects no age, rank, prestige, wealth, beauty or strength. When the last hour strikes for any man, he must inevitably die. Our bodies are prone to decay, far more so than the monuments and buildings that we see crumble into ruins. On the day when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, death was the punishment inflicted by God upon the whole human race, so that Isaias says: "All flesh is grass, and all the glory thereof as the flower of the field" (Is., xl, 6); and David asks: "Who is the man

that shall live and not see death?" (Ps., lxxxviii, 49). "All our days are spent . . . the days of our years are threescore and ten years, but if in the strong they be fourscore years; and what is more of them is labor and sorrow" (Ps., lxxxix, 9, 10). That we shall die is certain, but we know not the manner and time of our death. Some die a natural, others a violent death; some die suddenly, others very slowly; some die as innocent children, others in the prime of life, and others in old age; nothing is certain, except that we cannot escape death, and therefore we ought to use this world, as if we used it not, and not cling to earthly things. The married should turn to God and submit to His will, if death breaks their marriage bond. The unfortunate should not give way to excessive sorrow, nor the prosperous to unrestrained joy; the wealthy should not cling to their possessions nor allow them to interfere with their service of God; for nothing in this life deserves our devotion, since it will all pass away. A Christian should always be on his guard, lest death overtake him unawares. "Be ready," said our Lord, "for at what hour you think not, the Son of Man will come." How wretched are those who are taken unawares, or who are called hence at a time when their conscience is stained with grievous sin!

No doctrine taught by our holy religion is more important than that concerning the future life, upon which we shall enter when our bodies rise from the tomb. Our whole faith depends upon this doctrine, which is based upon our Lord's resurrection; we cannot help believing in our own resurrection, if we believe that Christ rose again. "If there be no resurrection of the dead," says St. Paul, "then Christ is not risen again; and if Christ be not risen again, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1 Cor., xv, 13, 14). Our Lord proclaimed this doctrine more emphatically perhaps

than any other; He said plainly: "The hour cometh wherein all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that have done good things shall come forth unto the resurrection of life; but they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of judgment" (John, v, 28, 29). Faith in the resurrection of the body was so general among the Jews that Martha declared publicly her conviction that Lazarus would rise again at the last day, and Christ did not teach this doctrine merely in words, but He actually raised several dead persons to life. They had, however, to die a second time, so their resuscitation was only proof of the resurrection, not of rising again to a new, eternal life. The resurrection of our Lord afforded the strongest possible evidence in support of our faith that we shall all rise again. He revealed to us, when He rose from the dead, what we shall be after our resurrection, for we shall be like Him.

We shall rise again with our bodies, which will come forth from the tomb, and be reunited with our souls. After His resurrection Christ's body and soul were again united, and when His disciples fancied that they beheld a spirit, He convinced them that He was really present in body, and ate and drank with them. After we have risen again, we shall no more be subject to death, but immortal in body as well as in soul. We learn this from our Lord's resurrection, for when He had triumphed over death, He died no more, death had no more dominion over Him. He showed Himself daily to His disciples, sometimes to many at a time; He went about with them, and took care that many should witness His ascension, lest they should suppose Him to have died a second time.

Our faith in the resurrection of the dead affords us much consolation in time of sorrow and suffering; it deters us from evil and impels us to do right, for the dread of punishment and the hope of reward are powerful influences in the life of man.

This faith warns us against ill-treating our bodies, and encourages us to regard them as destined to rise again glorious and incorruptible. Lastly, it diminishes our fear of death for ourselves, and also our sorrow for the departed.

There are many even among Christians, who do not accept this doctrine, well-grounded and consoling though it is. What can be their reason for denying it, and for obstinately asserting that death ends everything? We shall soon discover the reason if we observe the mode of life adopted by those who deny the resurrection. They think of nothing but self-indulgence and vice, and do not try to renounce them. Belief in the resurrection is incompatible with such things, since it would remind them that their bodies, dishonored by vice, and their souls, stained with sin, would have to appear before the Judge and receive from Him the sternest condemnation. Since it is impossible for such persons to look forward to a joyful resurrection, they strive to stifle the voice of faith, and deny that there will ever be any resurrection, and thus they lull their consciences to sleep.

When we have risen again, and our souls and bodies are reunited and fit for a fresh period of life, we shall have to face the last, general judgment, where Jesus Christ, our Teacher and Redeemer, triumphant over death and sin, will be our Judge. He foretold this, saying: "When the Son of Man shall come in his majesty, and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty; and all nations shall be gathered together before him, and he shall separate them one from another, as the shepherd separateth the sheep from the goats" (Matt., xxv, 31, 32). Those who are not already judged will then be sentenced. This general judgment is designed to convince all nations of God's justice and impartiality. Good and bad fortune, joy and sorrow, often in this world seem at variance

with the principles of justice, in the case of nations, as well as in that of individuals. But on the last great day everything will be revealed and all will be satisfied that God has been perfectly just, wise and impartial in His government of the world. We do not know when the last judgment will take place; Christ Himself said: "Of that day or hour no man knoweth, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son (*i. e.*, in His human nature), but the Father" (Mark, xiii, 32). On one occasion when the disciples asked: "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" our Saviour replied: "It is not for you to know the times or moments, which the Father hath put in his own power" (Acts, i, 6, 7). Nor is it for us to know the day of the last judgment; our business is to be ready for it, so that it may have no horrors for us. Amen.

51. Hell

When the sheep have been separated from the goats, and the just from the unjust, both will perceive the consequences of their actions, though with very different feelings. Most miserable will be the lot of the lost, who are cast out from their Lord's presence and who have no share in the glory and happiness proceeding from the love of the highest and most perfect goodness. They will be henceforth in disgrace, sorrow and anguish, and their bodies will participate in their misery, being imperishable and yet doomed to suffer. Their only associates are reprobate men and evil spirits; they are cut off by a vast abyss from all that is good. The place of their abode is known as hell, which is also called the place of exterior darkness, where "every one shall be salted with fire." Their punishments are exactly proportioned to their merits, for God is just and renders to every man according to his works, but no limit is assigned to the duration of their torments, for Holy Scripture teaches plainly that

these will last for ever. Our Lord speaks of a worm that dieth not, and a fire that is not extinguished. It is true that in the Bible the word *eternal* sometimes signifies an indefinitely long period, and it is only from the context that we can decide its precise meaning in any given passage, but there can be no doubt at all about the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not extinguished. If the torments of hell were not everlasting, we might assume that the souls confined there were capable of amendment. God does not inflict punishment arbitrarily, and if the condemned remain for all eternity in sin, they will for all eternity suffer its miserable consequences. We have no reason for thinking that any amendment takes place in eternity, and therefore there is no reason for doubting the permanence of the sufferings of the lost in hell. If it is asserted that punishment must eventually do good, the assertion is based upon the presumption that improvement is the sole aim of punishment, and that this aim is invariably attained, which certainly cannot be demonstrated. Even in this life all punishments have not the same object, and criminals condemned to imprisonment for their offences often come out of prison worse than they went in; this deterioration being the result of association with others worse than themselves. Now in hell all are wicked, and there is no desire of amendment. The devils show no improvement, and their knowledge of God makes them tremble with fear, but does them no good. In order to promote solid virtue, it is essential that the punishments of hell should be eternal; fear is a powerful deterrent from evil, and no one can persuade himself that his chastisement will be endurable because it will not last forever. In that case virtue would not be the only way to Heaven, for even vice would lead thither, though by a devious path. We need not, however, trouble about such theories, because Holy Scripture teaches us most plainly that the punishment of the wicked lasts

for ever, since they are no longer in God's grace. Our Lord contrasted the misery of sinners with the happiness of the just, which is undoubtedly everlasting (Matt., xxv, 46). Fearful remorse, ungratified cravings, separation from God and all that is good, absence of all hope—these are some of the sufferings of the lost, that should fill us with wholesome fear. May the remembrance of these things stimulate us to resist all temptation to sin. Amen.

52. Purgatory

Whether we have deserved reward or chastisement in the life to come is determined immediately after our death. We read in Ecclesiasticus (xi, 28): "It is easy before God on the day of death to reward everyone according to his ways." Man's destiny for all eternity depends upon the sentence given at the particular judgment. Those who depart hence in a state of charity towards God are sure to be saved; but those who have loved sin and resisted God's will, will suffer the consequences. In Hebrews, ix, 27, St. Paul says that it is appointed unto men once to die, and, after this, the judgment; and our Lord Himself taught the same doctrine in the parable of Dives and Lazarus, and in speaking to the penitent thief on the cross. Many, though striving to improve, do not attain perfection, and death overtakes them whilst their faults are still uncorrected, and their goods works are very deficient. One man may retain a tendency to self-indulgence all his life, another may be converted only on the approach of death, and though he is not in mortal sin, the force of his passions is not subdued, and he is guilty of many minor transgressions. Such men are not rejected by God, who pardons them when they receive the last Sacraments, and remits their eternal punishment, but nevertheless persons who die thus cannot at once be united with God, as nothing unclean can enter Heaven.

It follows therefore that there must be an intermediate state, to which those pass who at death are not free from small faults and shortcomings and not perfected in virtue, and in this state they are purified, cleansed from the stains of earth and prepared for Heaven. This state is generally known as purgatory, and it is a reality, not a mere figment of the imagination. Our Lord declared very emphatically (Matt., xii, 32) that the sin of a man, who spoke against the Holy Ghost, should be forgiven him neither in this world, nor in the world to come. There are therefore some sins which can be forgiven in the next life, and as forgiveness is impossible both in Heaven and in hell, there must be an intermediate state. St. Paul tells us to act in accordance with the precepts of Christ, and compares our works with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay and stubble. "Every man's work," he says, "shall be manifest, for the day of the Lord shall declare it, because it shall be revealed in fire; and the fire shall try every man's work, of what sort it is. If any man's work abide . . . he shall receive a reward; if any man's work burn, he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as by fire" (1 Cor., iii, 12-15). This passage shows us that, after death, our imperfect and faulty works and minor defects do not rob us of everlasting happiness, but compel us to undergo some suffering before we can enter Heaven. The teaching of the Fathers and the decisions of the Councils of the Church confirm this doctrine.

We know nothing with certainty regarding the pains of purgatory, but they are undoubtedly great, and it is called the place of darkness and sorrow. St. Paul speaks of fire, but we do not know whether he means natural fire or not; perhaps the torments undergone by the souls are like the burning heat of flames. The chief point is that in purgatory souls are cleansed, and freed from the last rem-

nants of sin and concupiscence. These souls can only suffer and wait; they can do nothing to help themselves, and it is well for them if their friends in the Church Militant remember them. It is impossible to describe their longing for release; they desire to behold God's face far more ardently than we can imagine, because they know and love Him better, and consequently they feel intense grief at being excluded from His presence. We have no means of learning the duration of their sojourn in purgatory; all that we know is that we are able to help them, and brotherly love should impel us to pray both for our friends and for all the departed, though we may be unaware of their disposition at the hour of death. We are especially bound to pray for all who have done us good. Prayers for the dead are mentioned in the Old Testament, for we read in the Second Book of Machabees (c. xii) that Judas, the valiant general, sent 12,000 silver drachms to Jerusalem, "for sacrifice to be offered for the sins of the dead"—and the author of the book remarks: "It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead, that they may be loosed from sins." The earliest records of the Catholic Church contain such prayers, which were in universal use. From the very beginning the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass has been offered, psalms recited, alms distributed and anniversaries observed for the release of the souls in purgatory.

It should be our aim to live so as to escape not hell only, but purgatory; and therefore we must carefully avoid even trifling sins and never put off doing penance. It is our duty to pray for the departed, that they may be loosed from the punishment due to their sins, and admitted to see God face to face in Heaven. Let us pray for all who die in the Lord, but especially for our own friends and relatives, that they may speedily be released from purgatory.

53. Heaven

The particular judgment takes place immediately after death, and every man is rewarded according to his works, for God, who judges all, is just and omniscient. Well for us if we are numbered among "the dead who die in the Lord," and are free from sin and full of love of God, for then Heaven is our portion, our lot and our inheritance. Heaven is a place of the purest and most intense joy, that is marred by no admixture of sorrow. St. John in the Apocalypse tells us that in the Heavenly Jerusalem there shall be no more death, nor mourning, nor crying, nor sorrow. The happy souls there have no reason to suffer, desire or fear anything, and all sorrow proceeds from one of these sources. St. Augustine thought that it was easier to say what was not in Heaven, than what was actually there. Let us follow his advice to-day in trying to form some idea of its joys.

The oppressed, the miserable and the heavy-laden should rejoice in the knowledge that their sufferings belong only to their place of exile, and not to their Heavenly home. There they will be free from every burden, and God will wipe away the tears from their eyes, and give them perfect rest and peace of mind, all anxieties being forgotten.

No matter how great the cravings of the human heart may be, they will be satisfied with the delights of Heaven, which are far beyond our comprehension. None of us are ever completely contented or perfectly happy in this world; complete contentment and perfect happiness are reserved for the saints in Heaven, who drink of the water that quenches all thirst for ever. Pope Gregory remarks that the thirst is not quenched, nor the desires gratified, once for all, but that the thirst is quenched and the desires gratified as

often as they make themselves felt, so that the saints are always and never satisfied. They enjoy all that they wish for, and hence they are satisfied; but they always wish for what they enjoy, and so they remain in a state of desire. But because the wish is not the outcome of any deficiency, and because their enjoyment results in no surfeit, they are perfectly happy, in spite of this intermingling of craving and gratification. They can never sorrow, since they have nothing to suffer, to desire or to dread. They know that their state of happiness will last for ever; so they cannot fear its loss. On earth all is liable to decay and change, but in Heaven it is otherwise, as every soul perceives at its entrance into glory.

The hearts of the redeemed in Heaven are overflowing with the most intense joy. St. Anselm bids us notice that on earth joy enters into the heart of man, but in Heaven the heart of man enters into joy; his whole soul with all its capacities is plunged into a boundless ocean of delights, and loses itself in joy, that is neither created nor natural, neither human nor angelic, but belongs to God Himself. How unspeakably good God is! He wills His elect to participate in His own happiness, and shares with them all that He possesses. This is what St. Paul means by telling us that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what things God hath prepared for them that love Him (1 Cor., ii, 9). The contemplation and love of God, and the possession of God resulting from them, cause the souls of the blessed to enjoy raptures such as we cannot imagine. The contemplation of God is the source of all the happiness in Heaven. The saints see Him face to face, not in any dark and mysterious way, as the patriarchs and prophets beheld Him, nor as in a glass or a picture, but as He really is, in all the glory and splendor of His perfection, majesty and beauty. The innermost secrets of God lie revealed to their gaze, they comprehend

the mysteries of the Trinity, the Incarnation, the Redemption and government of the world. The saints perceive the just and merciful intentions with which God distributes the good things of this life so unequally, and permits evil to prevail. They understand why the wicked prosper, whilst the righteous suffer many tribulations; in short, as Pope Gregory says, they see everything, because they behold Him who sees all things. It is vain to attempt a description or an explanation of what the saints feel, when they see God face to face. St. John the Evangelist tells us that this sight raises, ennobles and transforms the soul, making it resemble God Himself. In Heaven all is in God, and God in all; all things reflect His infinite perfections, and share His Divine nature, joy and happiness.

This resemblance is no doubt produced chiefly by the ardent love, that is a necessary result of the direct contemplation of God. It is by no mere accident, but in virtue of His very being, that God is the purest, greatest, best, most beautiful and infinite goodness. Who can behold Him without amazement and love? Surely so priceless a possession can be acquired only at an infinite cost? No, my brethren, let us thank God for His mercy in offering it to us for a very trifling price. If only we are faithful to Him in little things, performing the duties of our station, and bearing the trials that He sends us, we are sure of Heaven. Sometimes it may cost us a violent effort to be faithful even in little things, but this is of small importance, and we should bear in mind St. Paul's words: "I reckon that the sufferings of this time are not worthy to be compared with the glory to come that shall be revealed in us" (Rom., viii, 18). Amen.

THE COMMANDMENTS

1. The Ten Commandments

The ten commandments are a summary of all law. God gave Moses many instructions but he received only two tables of stone, which were preserved in the Ark and called the tables of the testimony. All God's other laws depend upon the Ten Commandments, which fall into two groups, those inculcating our duty towards God, and those inculcating our duty towards our neighbor—in other words, the law of charity towards God and man, "on these two commandments depend the whole law and the prophets." God Himself is the author of this law, and His own words, as well as innumerable passages of Holy Scripture, bear testimony to this fact. Every man is aware that God has impressed upon his mind a law, enabling him to distinguish right from wrong, and good from evil, and the force of this law is identical with that of the written law of God. This is one proof that God must be the author of both alike.

This interior light had been almost obscured by men's persistence in immorality and wrong-doing, and when God gave the law to Moses, He wished to restore its former brilliancy to it, in order that no one, on hearing that the law of Moses was abolished, should suppose himself free from all obligation to obey the other laws, for it is certain that we are bound to obey these laws, not because they were given us through Moses, but because we were born with them impressed on our minds, and because they were expounded and confirmed by Christ.

Therefore God Himself gave the law, the wisdom and justice of which none can question, and the infinite force of which none can escape. When God commanded men through the prophets to keep

His law, He said: "I am the Lord." We ought to thank Him for letting us thus know His will, on which our temporal and eternal welfare depend; and for our own sake we ought to do our best always to act in accordance with it.

Three days before the law was given, God ordered all the Israelites to wash their garments and refrain from all uncleanness, that they might the more worthily receive it. On the third day all were summoned to be present, but Moses alone was permitted to ascend the mountain. God appeared in all His majesty, in thunder, lightning and dense mist, and then He began to speak to Moses, and gave him the law. In His Divine wisdom He acted thus in order to remind us to receive His law with pure and humble hearts, and that any neglect of these commandments would bring down upon us the punishments inflicted by God's justice.

St. Augustine gives the reason why the commandments of this law impose no hardship upon us: "How can anyone assert," he asks, "that it is impossible for man to love his Creator and Benefactor, his most loving Father, and also to love his neighbors? He that loveth, hath fulfilled the law." Hence, St. John the Evangelist says that God's commandments are "not heavy," inasmuch as nothing more just and beneficial could be required of men. If anyone pleads the frailty of nature, as an excuse for not loving God, he ought to consider that God, who demands this love, implants it by His Holy Spirit in our hearts, and this Holy Spirit is given by our Heavenly Father to all who ask Him for it.

All men are bound to obey God's law; let no one fancy himself exempt from this obligation. St. Paul says: "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the observation of the commandments of God" (1 Cor., vii, 19); and elsewhere he says: "Neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but a

new creature" (Gal., vi. 15). By "a new creature" he means one who obeys God's laws, and whoever does this, loves God. Man may be justified and may amend his life before he observes all God's commandments in his outward actions, but no one, who enjoys the use of reason, can become good and just, unless from his heart he is ready to observe them all.

Rich are the rewards given to those who faithfully keep the commandments. They uplift our souls to God and obtain for us true joy and wisdom; but it behooves us to keep them less for our own advantage than for God's sake. He reveals His will to men in these commandments, and we ought to obey them, and, like the rest of creation, do His will.

Let us reflect further how God in giving us these laws displayed His goodness and mercy, for He might have forced us to serve Him without any recompense, but, as it is, He has combined His glory and our advantage in such a way that, what tends to our good, redounds to His glory. Thus in the observance of God's law lies an abundant reward, consisting less of earthly happiness than of heavenly joys, which we can merit by holy and just works with God's merciful assistance.

Of all the nations in the world, God chose the descendants of Abraham to be His people, and promised them the land of Canaan; yet 400 years elapsed before this promise was fulfilled, and whilst the Israelites were wandering in various countries, God never forsook them, but defended them from all their enemies. Before they went to Egypt, He sent a man thither, whose prudence saved the inhabitants of that country from starvation. In Egypt they multiplied so greatly that Pharao feared them and tried to diminish their number, but God delivered them and sent Moses to guide His People

to Canaan. During their long sojourn in the desert He gave them His laws, written on two tables of stone. These are briefly:

1. Thou shalt believe in one God.
2. Thou shalt not take the name of God in vain.
3. Thou shalt keep holy the Sabbath day.
4. Thou shalt honor thy father and mother.
5. Thou shalt not kill.
6. Thou shalt not commit adultery.
7. Thou shalt not steal.
8. Thou shalt not bear false witness.
9. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife.
10. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods.

These ten commandments are still binding upon us, and Jesus Christ impressed upon us afresh the need of observing them, if we wish to enter into eternal happiness. Let us therefore study each commandment carefully, and, as we do so, we shall realize how necessary and beneficial it is for us to observe them, and consequently we shall strive to obey them with greater readiness and zeal. Amen.

2. The Love of God

Love is not merely a matter of sentiment, but it concerns also the faculties of the soul. Whoever really loves another, delights in thinking of him, speaks frequently of him, and cherishes such hearty good will towards him that he is always striving to please him, whilst he is very careful not to displease him in any way. This is the sort of love that we should have for God. It is not a momentary emotion, nor is it a sentiment, but it is real good will. Whoever loves God, delights in Him, and is determined to do everything that will

please Him, and to avoid everything that is contrary to His most holy will. Now the commandments tell us what God desires of us, therefore our love of Him is a hearty good will that manifests itself in their observance.

This love of God is universal, effective, and steadfast.

a. It is *universal,* if our readiness to do God's Will extends to all the commandments. We must make no exceptions, but try in everything to please Him.

b. It is *effective,* if we really accomplish the good works prescribed by the commandments, and refrain from the evil that they forbid. St. John teaches us to love not only in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 John, iii, 18).

c. It is *steadfast,* if nothing makes us do anything contrary to God's Will, not the example of others, nor our own misery, nor the hope of temporal advantage.

Moreover we ought to love God for His own sake, because He is worthy of all our love, and we ought to try to keep His laws in order to please Him. If we do our duty chiefly with a view to our happiness in this world, or to secure the praise of men or for any other similar reason, we are loving not God, but ourselves, and this love is worthless in His sight. Our Lord warned us against it, when He said: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them; otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in Heaven" (Matth., vi, 1). The Pharisee in the parable acted thus; he made a display of his piety and observance of the law, in order to win the esteem of men. Our Lord says that people of this kind have already received their reward. I do not mean that a man's love of God is not genuine, if he takes pains to obey the law in order to have eternal life, for our happiness in the world to come consists in our union with God, and so whoever loves God for the

sake of this reward, seeks his supreme happiness in God, and looks upon Him as his highest good. This line of thought is in complete harmony with God's Will, and is not a mark of selfishness.

We must love God above all things, with our whole heart, mind and strength. Nothing is so worthy of our love, therefore nothing ought to lead us to disregard His Will. A man who loves God above all things, is firmly resolved to forego happiness and advantages and to endure persecution, tortures and even death, rather than transgress the law of the Lord. It often costs us a great deal to obey the commandments; we may have to sacrifice our prosperity, peace, happiness and amusements in order to do so. Christ says: "He that shall lose his life for my sake, shall find it. What doth it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his own soul?" (Matth., xvi, 25, 26). The Apostles underwent every imaginable hardship in the discharge of their duty, and yet they said: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation? or distress? or famine? or nakedness? or danger? or persecution? or the sword?" (Rom., viii, 35).

Since we are bound to love God above all things, we must never break our resolution to keep the law, and so we ought frequently to renew our good will, and thus make this resolution the guiding principle in our lives. In the sight of God nothing is so important as the faithful observance of His commandments, and we can please Him by no other means. Our true happiness depends solely upon our obedience to His law, and we should often meditate on this fact, for He possesses all perfections and is supremely worthy of our love. A remembrance of these truths will help us to delight in Him and to live according to His will. We may be asked how often a Christian ought to make an act of love, though it is a strange question. It is quite plain that we are bound to love and obey God, as soon as we

know Him and His holy will. We must make good resolutions, whenever we ask for forgiveness of our sins; and the only way of really sanctifying holydays is by means of good resolutions and dispositions, and by keeping the laws laid down for their observance. Surely it is our duty every day to promise obedience and love to our Heavenly Father, remembering what genuine love of God means.

Another obligation, arising out of our love of God, is to do everything for His honor, and to try in all things to accomplish His will. "Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever else you do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Cor., x, 31). We honor God, when we make His will the rule controlling all our actions, and use everything as He would have us use it. It is not enough to obey Him in great and important matters; we must act conscientiously also in little things. We must avoid little faults as well as serious offences and grievous sins. We must do all the good works prescribed by the law, whether they be productive of great results or not. We must strive to act with exactitude, courage and promptitude, so that we may accustom ourselves to do right; and in this way we shall increase in the love of God. Amen.

3. The Love of Our Neighbor

1. The relations in which human beings stand to one another are very various and complex; there are many things that cut us off from one another—differences in rank, wealth and taste give rise both to friendships and enmities, and differences in religion separate not only nations but individuals. Love of our neighbor ought to be superior to all these differences, and exist quite independently of them, for it ought to embrace all humanity without exception—all mankind in general, and each human being in particular.

Nature teaches us this lesson, but it was impressed upon us far more emphatically by Jesus Christ. We were all made by the same Creator in His own likeness, formed of the same clay and endowed with the same faculties. Why then should we make distinctions, loving some and hating others? When God created us, He showed no preference, and excluded none of us from His love. Christ's doctrine and example convey the same lesson, and bid us love all men without exception or difference. This law is binding upon all, high as well as low, and those who are above others in rank or position, are peculiarly bound not to be proud and domineering, but gentle and considerate towards their subordinates. In the parable of Dives and Lazarus our Lord insists that it is the duty of the rich to be loving and merciful to the poor, and that any wealthy man, who refuses to recognize a poor man as his neighbor, deserves eternal damnation. Our Lord included even our enemies in the law of love and said: "You have heard the law, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy'; but I say to you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you."

Even those who differ from us in religion are our neighbors, as we learn from the parable of the Good Samaritan, who showed himself the neighbor of the wounded traveler; for the Jews and Samaritans, as a rule, were bitter enemies.

In short there is no one whom our Divine Saviour excluded as unworthy of our charity, and He taught His followers to do good to all, like our merciful Father in Heaven, who makes His sun shine on good and bad alike, and is kind to all, even to the ungrateful and wicked. Christ's life on earth was an irrefutable confirmation of His doctrine; none could complain of being treated uncharitably by Him. He went to raise the daughter of a prominent Temple official from the dead: He welcomed the poor blind beggar by the wayside,

and came to the help of the neglected sufferer by the pool of Siloe; He recalled His friend Lazarus to life, and He healed Malchus, one of those sent to arrest Him. He readily granted the centurion's prayer, and did not disdain the Samaritan woman at the well. If we need further proof that Jesus loved all men without exception, we need only think of His prayer on the cross for His enemies, and of His death for the salvation of all mankind. Are not the words and actions of our dear Saviour and Master enough to make us too regard all men as our brethren, and love them as ourselves? Yet, nevertheless, we seem unconvinced of the duty of practising this universal charity, and many are sadly deficient in it, since every sharp word or trifling insult arouses their fury, every advantage enjoyed by another stirs up not only their envy, but their hatred, so that they eagerly avail themselves of every opportunity to injure him and rejoice over any misfortune that befalls him, and either secretly or openly treat all whom they dislike with hostility. Such persons heed very little the words and example of our Divine Master, who sought to inculcate universal love of our fellowmen. The universality of Christian charity is one of its chief features. Unless we love *all* men, we do not possess Christian charity, such as Jesus taught and practised; we are not His followers, nor are we true Christians. No, we must love all men, as He loved them, and now we have to consider what sort of love is required of us.

2. The law of charity is too important for our Divine Saviour to have left us in any doubt as to the way in which to obey it. He determined the measure of our charity, and laid down a general rule that anyone could understand: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

How do we love ourselves? The answer to this question will show us how to love our neighbor. Where our own happiness or

prosperity is at stake, we are conscientious and honest over our work. We try to discover our own good qualities, and do our utmost to further our own interests, to avoid troubles, and to secure the good things that we desire. We are frank, honest and straightforward with ourselves for our own advantage. In addition to all this we display great zeal and activity, for we are not satisfied with loving ourselves to the extent of wishing for good things, but we strive to obtain them; we seize every opportunity of getting on, and employ all sorts of means to secure what we want. We exert all our powers, we shrink from no expenditure of money or labor, we ask help of others and expect them to do their best for us—in short, we are indefatigable in our efforts for our own welfare, and our self-love is as beneficent as it is honest. This is the way in which we ought to love our neighbor, not in word only, but in deed and in truth. We feel in our hearts an unfeigned desire to avoid evil and enjoy happiness, and we ought to wish the same for our fellowmen, and sympathize with them in their joys and sorrows, showing our love in readiness to serve and help them.

In the parable of the Good Samaritan our Saviour shows us most plainly that this sympathy and willingness to serve are duties. This good man saw the poor sufferer and sympathized with him, feeling his sorrows as if they had been his own. Compassion, such as under similar circumstances he would have wished to receive, filled his heart, and moved him to render actual service. He did all that was in his power to relieve the wounded man, pouring oil and wine into his wounds and binding them up; he sacrificed his own convenience and delayed his journey by his charity, and spent money in providing comforts for the stranger. This Samaritan certainly loved his neighbor as himself.

Does not this story make us feel ashamed when we think how little we do for our fellowmen? We live in an age when a great deal is said and written about charity, as if we were all filled with this virtue. Almost everyone likes to pose as a friend of humanity, and tries to appear gentle and courteous, using affectionate language, making plausible promises, and uttering all sorts of assurances of esteem and devotion. But were it possible to read the secrets of the heart, we should soon see that this is mere lip-service, concealing the feelings of hatred, revenge and envy that really prevail, so that all these professions of charity are hypocritical. Again, many people, far from helping their neighbor, try in every way to bring loss and misery upon him. Others are ready to make protestations of sympathy, and talk as if they were indeed good Samaritans, but they are very careful to avoid sacrificing their own comfort, or incurring a little expense and inconvenience for the sake of others; no, like the priest and the Levite, they pass by and do nothing. They do not love others as themselves, nor do they possess the genuine, active charity which Jesus Himself practised, and which He requires of us. Remember that this genuine, active charity is indispensable, if we are to be true Christians, and if we are not to be cut off from God, since "God is charity, and he that abideth in charity, abideth in God and God in him." Let us, therefore, love one another and all our fellow-creatures honestly and in deed, as we love ourselves; if we do this, we shall receive the rich reward promised us by Christ, inasmuch as this love will make us children of God and heirs of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen.

4. The Corporal Works of Mercy

Our charity towards the sick and sorrowful takes the form of works of mercy, which are spiritual or corporal, according as the suffering to be relieved is one of the mind or of the body. The corporal works of mercy are:

1. To feed the hungry.
2. To give drink to the thirsty.
3. To clothe the naked.
4. To harbor the harborless.
5. To visit the sick.
6. To visit the imprisoned.
7. To bury the dead.

Why ought we to be merciful?—(1) Because God is merciful towards His creatures, providing for each of them what is necessary. (2) Because it is God's will. He sent Dives to hell as a punishment for his want of mercy toward Lazarus, and He gave the servant, who had no mercy upon his fellow servants, over to the tortures, until he should pay all the debt which his master would otherwise have remitted. These instances show us that God requires us to be merciful to the poor and needy.

(3) Because Jesus took pity upon us, and for our sake became poor, in order to make us rich.

(4) Because by showing mercy to others we can secure our own happiness in time and in eternity.

A merciful man realizes the truth of many statements in the Bible. "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts, xx, 35). "Blessed is he that understandeth concerning the needy and the

poor; the Lord will deliver him in the evil day" (Ps., xl, 2). "He that hath mercy on the poor lendeth to the Lord, and He will repay him" (Prov., xix, 17). "He that followeth justice and mercy, shall find life, justice and glory" (Prov. xxi, 21). "He that is inclined to mercy shall be blessed" (Prov., xxii, 9). "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt., vii, 2). "He that giveth to the poor shall not want" (Prov., xxviii, 27). "Thy prayers and thy alms are ascended for a memorial in the sight of God" (Acts x, 4), and "thou shalt not lose thy reward" (Matt., x, 42). "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy" (Matt., v, 7). "Come, ye blessed of my Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world" (Matt., xxv, 34). There are innumerable reasons for being merciful and many glorious instances of mercy, besides the rewards promised by God to those who are kind to others, and yet people find all sorts of excuses for neglecting the duty of charity.

They plead (1) that they have nothing to spare, but any one who wishes to help another will find some means of doing so, without injuring himself. (2) That they must provide for themselves, which is all very well, but no excuse for not helping others. (3) That they have not much to give; but God regards the good will of the giver, rather than the magnitude of his gift, so that a penny, given willingly, is a greater offering in His sight than a dollar given grudgingly, and even a drink of water is richly rewarded. (4) That they are not unsympathetic, since they are ready to say a kind word to those in poverty; but would these people be grateful for a kind word if they themselves were in want? (5) That there are no honest poor, and that they have no wish to help lazy rogues; but if they took pains, they could easily discover worthy sharers of their bounty. (6) That most poor people are ungrateful; but

this is not true, and if it were the case, are we to be merciful only in order to be thanked and rewarded?

You see, my brethren, how all these arguments are simply excuses, and betray an unwillingness to help others. Let us not have recourse to such evasions, but learn rather what is the best way to benefit others and at the same time to please God.

1. We must be merciful to all in need of our assistance, regardless of their station or religion, taking as our model the Good Samaritan, who came to the rescue of a wounded Jew.

2. In doing works of mercy we must have a pure intention, and be motived by love of God and our neighbor, not by any desire for fame or our own advantage. Jesus says: "Take heed that you do not your justice before men, to be seen by them, otherwise you shall not have a reward of your Father who is in Heaven. Therefore when thou dost an alms deed, sound not a trumpet, as the hypocrites do . . . that they may be honored by men . . . but when thou dost alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doth . . . and thy Father who seeth in secret will repay thee" (Matt., vi, 1-4).

Our good works must proceed from real charity, for "if I should distribute all my goods to feed the poor, . . . and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing."

3. Every man should give alms proportionate to his possessions, as Tobias taught his son to do, saying: "Give alms out of thy substance, and turn not away thy face from any poor person, for so it shall come to pass that the face of the Lord shall not be turned from thee. According to thy ability be merciful; if thou have much, give abundantly; if thou have little, take care even so to bestow willingly a little, for thus thou storest up to thyself a good reward for the day of necessity" (Tob., iv, 7-10).

4. We must show charity readily and cheerfully, for "God loveth

a cheerful giver" (2 Cor., ix, 7). "In thy good deeds make no complaint, and when thou givest anything, add not grief by an evil word" (Ecclus, xviii, 15). Ready help is the best, not that which is given grudgingly and after many delays.

5. Nevertheless we ought to use discrimination, and help the genuine poor, and institutions for their benefit, rather than beggars, tramps and idlers, who deserve no assistance, and often laugh at those who give them anything. Even in the time of the Apostles there were organized means of providing for the poor, "For as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the price of the things they sold . . . and distribution was made to every one according as he had need" (Acts, iv, 34, 35).

6. Finally we should have some method in our charity, thinking first of our own poor relations, and helping the very poor and the more deserving rather than those who stand less in need of assistance.

My Brethren, let us ask ourselves in the words of the holy Job: "Have I denied to the poor what they desired? Have I made the eyes of the widow wait? Have I eaten my morsel alone, and have the fatherless not eaten thereof? Have I despised him that was perishing for want of clothing?" Can we answer these questions as Job did, and say with him: "I delivered the poor man that cried out, and the fatherless, that had no helper. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I comforted the heart of the widow. I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame; I was the father of the poor?" May God grant that we can truthfully answer thus. We shall be able to do so, if we always bear in mind our Saviour's Words: "Be ye merciful, as your father also is merciful." Amen.

5. The Spiritual Works of Mercy.

It is our duty to promote also the spiritual welfare of our neighbor, by instructing and admonishing him, and by setting him a good example. Teachers and parents are under a peculiar obligation to care for the spiritual welfare of all under their charge. In writing to the Galatians (vi, 1), St. Paul says: "If a man be overtaken in any fault, you who are spiritual instruct such a one in the spirit of meekness." Thus the Apostle teaches us not only that it is a duty to admonish others, but also how the admonition should be given. The same lesson is taught by the seven spiritual works of mercy, viz.:

1. To convert the sinner.
2. To instruct the ignorant.
3. To counsel the doubtful.
4. To comfort the sorrowful.
5. To bear wrongs patiently.
6. To forgive injuries.
7. To pray for the living and the dead.

1. Sinners who resist conversion are to be punished, but by whom?

a. Parents should punish their children, if words are of no avail. Solomon says that the rod of correction drives away folly from the heart of a child, and that the father who spareth the rod, hateth his son (Prov., xxii, 15; xiii, 24).

b. The government has to punish offenders in order to put down dishonesty, drunkenness and immorality.

c. Teachers and masters sometimes have to punish their pupils and subjects, if they refuse to obey and give way to wickedness and insubordination.

d. The clergy are bound to impose penalties, if after warnings,

threats and admonitions, offenders still continue to give scandal; but they must not resort to punishment until all other means of averting evil have failed.

2. Instructing the ignorant is a very important task that falls chiefly to the clergy, since they are appointed to preach the Gospel. They try to instruct children at school, adults in church, penitents in the confessional, and seek in every way to prevent men from falling into sin and error. Teachers, too, are bound to instruct the ignorant, not only by imparting knowledge, but also by inculcating good, moral principles. Hence parents, who have neither time nor ability to teach their children themselves, should send them regularly to school. Every one ought to instruct the ignorant whenever he can do so with propriety. A friend can often do much towards inducing another to forsake evil and do good.

3. Many people are in doubt regarding their spiritual and temporal concerns, the choice of an occupation or some domestic matter; they need prudent counsel, which often is very beneficial in enabling them to see what they are fit for, and how they ought to act. Regarding conscientious difficulties it is of the greatest advantage to have the advice of a wise priest or of a friend—such advice is most valuable, since frequently eternal as well as temporal happiness depend upon it.

4. There is a great deal of suffering in the world, and it causes much sorrow, which is apt to make men impatient, angry, faint-hearted, and perhaps even desperate. All such need comfort and encouragement to trust God and submit patiently to His will. When the mind grows calm even bodily pain is often alleviated, and no one who can possibly comfort the sorrowful should fail to do so.

5 and 6. A difficult but very meritorious task is to bear wrongs patiently and to forgive injuries. We may have to put up with wrongs that we have not deserved, and if we always resented them

there would be no end to lawsuits and quarrels. Sometimes we are ridiculed on account of our religion, and despised as idolaters, hypocrites or fools. As a rule, the best plan is to say nothing, but if a man's honor is assailed he may defend himself and appeal to the State for protection, though he may not avenge himself. Christianity teaches us to pray for those who curse and insult us, and by quiet endurance of wrongs and forgiveness of injuries we can promote the restoration and preservation of peace, avert many sins from ourselves and others, and further our salvation.

7. Lastly it is a very good work to pray for the living and the dead. We have not all either ability or opportunity to convert sinners, instruct the ignorant, counsel the doubtful or comfort the sorrowful, but we all can and ought to pray for the living and the dead. Our Lord taught us to pray, and St. James writes (v, 16): "Pray one for another, that you may be saved, for the continual prayer of a just man availeth much." Prayer benefits both those who pray, and those for whom it is offered. My Brethren, let us be merciful to the souls of others, that God may have mercy upon us. Let us follow our Lord's example, for He rebuked the Pharisees, and lost no opportunity of instructing the ignorant, of counselling the doubtful, and of comforting the sorrowful. On the Cross He forgave His enemies, bore all wrongs most patiently, and prayed for all mankind. He practised all the spiritual works of mercy; may God grant that we do the same. Amen.

6. Christian Self-Love.

We have duties to ourselves, as well as to God and our neighbors, and just as all our duties to God are the outcome of our love for Him, so are all our duties to ourselves the outcome of our self-love, which is good only when it is rational and

Christian. Such self-love has the following characteristics: (1) We should make the attainment of virtue and eternal salvation our one supreme object in life, as our Saviour taught us when He said: "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his justice" (Matt., vi, 33). (2) We should employ the best means for attaining this object; St. Paul told the Corinthians that he chastised his body and brought it into subjection, and we also should practise mortification. (3) We should most carefully avoid sin and every occasion of sin, since, as David said (Ps. x, 6), "he that loveth iniquity hateth his own soul." (4) We should try to preserve and improve our mental faculties, especially our understanding, and to strengthen our will. (5) We should take proper care also of our bodies. (6) We should not pay more attention to our bodily than to our spiritual welfare, for our Saviour said: "What shall it profit a man, if he gain the whole world, and suffer the loss of his soul?" (Mark, viii, 36). (7) If it is impossible for us to secure the welfare both of soul and body, we should give preference to the soul, and die rather than allow it to perish. (8) In all our efforts to secure the welfare of both, soul and body, we must always remember that it is more important to do right than to preserve our life, that life is more than health, and health more than all other temporal advantages.

These rules enable us to understand what is meant by rational and Christian self-love.

As we consist of body and soul, we have duties towards both, and are bound to provide for our maintenance. We do not live each for himself, but with our fellow-creatures, and this fact imposes upon us further obligations, viz., to safeguard our honor and good reputation, and to look after our temporal concerns and property. This brief consideration will serve to show us that we must discharge the following duties to ourselves.

1. Each individual must care chiefly for his soul, and try to develop his understanding and improve his conduct. As he grows older, he ought to increase in wisdom and goodness.

2. Since the chief obstacles in our way arise from our fleshly desires and evil tendencies, though partly also from natural indolence and indifference, each man should strive to subdue his perverse desires and inclinations, and to overcome his indolence.

3. He should care not only for his soul, but also for his body, and preserve his life and health.

4. He should avoid everything that might corrupt his soul or injure his body; hence he must beware of excess in eating and drinking, of impurity and of anger.

5. In order not to give way to violent outbursts of anger, he should practise patience, whenever anything unpleasant occurs.

6. He should take care of his honor and good reputation and attend to his temporal affairs, that he may secure his lawful prosperity.

These are duties that each of us is bound to perform conscientiously, and whoever does so, has a rational and Christian love of self. Amen.

7. Sinful Self-Love.

1. Hidden deep in every human heart is a tendency to self-love which is incessantly active, influencing our thoughts, desires and actions, blinding us to our own defects, and arousing within us a wish for honor, praise and prestige amongst men. This tendency makes us overrate our own importance and capabilities, so that we regard any good qualities that we possess, as it were, through a magnifying glass. We compare ourselves with others, and fancy that we are greatly superior in intellect and business capacity, or

that we are more dignified, skilful and conscientious. We flatter ourselves that we are more charitable, and consequently have a better claim to be respected by those around us. Often we attach great value to things that are really accidental and unimportant. Many pride themselves on their good birth or on the possession of money and talents. Others are vain because they are well grown and handsome. All this folly is due to self-love.

2. Self-love is a result of original sin. In his epistle to the Romans, St. Paul says that there is within him a law fighting against the law of his mind, and he calls this law the law of sin, by which he means an unhappy tendency to do wrong, to exalt ourselves above others, to lay claim to exaggerated or fictitious advantages and good qualities, to seek self in all things, to judge everything by our own standard, to ascribe to ourselves alone all the merits of our good works, and to make self the aim of all our desires. In other words, what the Apostle calls the law of sin is nothing but self-love, which prevents us from living in accordance with the law of the Spirit, that instructs us in our duties. The result of self-love is that we obey the lusts of the flesh, and fail to do what the law of the Spirit enjoins, and as this occurs in consequence of original sin, we may call self-love one of its penalties.

3. This self-love is totally different from the Christian self-love that we considered before. When Christ commanded us to love our neighbors as ourselves, He certainly took it for granted that some form of self-love was permissible. This consists in doing our duty so as to secure our salvation, and in trying to recognize our faults and shortcomings with a view to their amendment. We must on no account yield to self-indulgence, but do our duty as Christians, no matter how hard it may appear. Sinful self-love on the contrary makes every kind of concession to self-indulgence,

aspires to honor and the esteem of men, and blinds and deceives us, so that we believe ourselves to possess qualities of which we are quite devoid, and exaggerate such as we really have, whilst we shut our eyes to our faults, which might humiliate us and reveal to us our real unworthiness. The two forms of self-love differ greatly.

4. Sinful self-love is from one point of view the source of all our sins. If we consider our various evil tendencies and trace them back to their origin, we shall discover that they all proceed from self-love, since the man who sins is invariably pleasing himself. It is only to exalt himself, that any one abuses his neighbors, and discusses his faults and weaknesses. It is only to enrich himself, that an avaricious man strives to acquire wealth. It is only to render himself the owner of what he believes will make him happy, that an envious man begrudges his neighbor all success and rejoices when losses come upon him. Looking at it thus, we may safely pronounce self-love to lie at the root of all vice.

5. Self-love has a wonderful faculty of making all vices look like virtues. It sets before us the object of our desires in a partial light, so that we do not perceive what is wrong and dangerous about it, but see only any advantages that it may possess. For instance it allows the proud to regard their arrogance as a mark of proper self-respect, and prevents their seeing that it involves a want of Christian charity and courtesy. Self-love suggests to a miser that he is prudent and thrifty, not that he is mean and stingy. Self-love makes the luxurious and idle fancy that they need relaxation of mind and body, not that they are wasting precious time, neglecting their obvious duties and running the risk of falling into grievous sins. In fact there is hardly a vice that is not so distorted by self-love as to appear positively virtuous; and good, as St. Augustine says, "what we desire, is good, what pleases us, is holy in our eyes."

If we want a thing, self-love represents it as good, honorable and permissible, whereas it is enough for us to have an aversion to it and at once self-love finds many excuses for our not doing it.

6. Self-love is a great obstacle to self-knowledge. However self-satisfied a man may be, he is still aware that he possesses some defects, since even the best of us are not perfect, and something casts a shadow over even our greatest qualities. Moreover much goes on within the heart that is unseen by others, but that nevertheless diminishes a man's self-esteem, and if he reflects on his own frailties, he will soon be convinced that he is not much better than his neighbors, whose faults, shortcomings and passions are so easily recognized. Yet many a man stops short at this point, and continues to live like the rest, dragged to and fro by his own inclinations, never troubling about the faults which he refuses to see, or the bad habits that he does not try to cure, because he does not consider them sinful. He refrains from examining the inner recesses of his heart and conscience and from ascertaining how much there is opposed to God's law. He is self-satisfied, and so fails to acquire self-knowledge.

7. It is of the utmost importance for every man to rid himself of the blindness due to self-love; there are three ways in which this may be done:

(a) Let him frequently examine his actions, and survey them with some suspicion that they may not be quite so good as he supposed. Let him subject them to an impartial investigation, and he will no doubt discover defects in them, and realize that his own self-love has hitherto blinded him.

(b) Let him frequently examine his conscience. Very few people have an accurate knowledge of the true state of their conscience, and self-love encourages this ignorance, which can be re-

moved only if they resolutely tear away the veil concealing their own faults.

(c) Finally, prayer is the best means that he can employ in order to frustrate the designs of self-love and to acquire true self-knowledge. Let him therefore pray to God for grace to enlighten his mind.

Would that we all had recourse continually to these efficacious means of learning to know ourselves! They would prevent self-love from injuring us and gaining a hold upon us. Amen.

8. The First Commandment.

1. The first Commandment requires us to worship God only, *i. e.*, to think of Him in the right way, and to feel and act in accordance with our knowledge of Him. The truths of faith reveal to us His attributes and designs, and show us how He wishes to lead us to our final end. God is the Creator and preserver of all things, therefore reverence and obedience are due to Him. He is all-powerful, and all-good, therefore we ought to trust Him. He is our Father and Benefactor, therefore we owe Him gratitude and filial love. He is just and holy, therefore we must obey Him. In His mercy He gives us the means of obtaining forgiveness for sin, therefore we ought to avail ourselves of them. He is true and faithful, therefore we are bound to believe Him. When we speak of worshiping and serving God, we mean that we reverence, love and trust Him above all things, because He is most perfect, most merciful, and most powerful, and most worthy of our love.

2. Our service of God should be voluntary, not compulsory, but we are impelled to serve Him if we are truly submissive to His will and recognize the relation in which we stand to Him. We serve Him because we want to belong wholly to Him, and to live solely for Him, *i. e.*, for His honor and glory. The remembrance that we are His creatures, absolutely dependent upon Him, prompts us to serve Him, and at our Baptism we were admitted to the number of those who worship Him in spirit and in truth.

3. We honor God chiefly when we pray, for in prayer, more than at any other time, man acknowledges his own weakness and God's omnipotence, and this acknowledgment underlies all true worship. It behooves us, whenever we pray, to remember the benefits that we

receive from God, and to thank Him for them. In writing to the Philippians (iv, 6) St. Paul says: "Be nothing solicitous, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your petitions be made known to God." Whoever realizes that a great benefit has been conferred upon him, perceives at once that he is bound, as far as possible, to make some return for it. Now the only way in which men can make any return for the benefits that they receive from God, is by showing their love and reverence for Him, and by striving to do His will. If we are grateful, we shall feel that we are nothing before God, and this prompts us to serve and worship Him in spirit and in truth, not with hypocritical, but with genuine and lasting reverence.

4. All true service of God is summed up in the words "worship in spirit and in truth." They express man's consciousness of his dependence upon God, and his recognition of the same. Worship is a kind of honor due to God alone, and is distinct from the veneration that we pay to the saints and our fellowmen, which, when it is genuine, is the outcome of our sense that the person whom we revere possesses extraordinary merits.

5. Whenever a Christian enters a church to worship God, he should try to awaken within himself feelings of contrition, since otherwise his worship is imperfect. Like the publican he should seriously examine his conscience, and then exclaim: "God be merciful to me, a sinner." Let him kneel down and reflect upon the sins that render him unworthy of God's favor, thinking how he may best expiate them and avoid them in future. Then, because he cannot accomplish this without assistance, let him implore God to give him the graces that he needs for this purpose.

6. Nothing tends so much as the public worship of God to stimulate us to earnest devotion. Everything there contributes to arouse

good resolutions in our minds, and the members of a large congregation encourage one another to pray. The ceremonial of the Mass reminds us of the greatest benefit that we have received from God, and of the chief proof of His love for men. What opportunities we have in the Mass for true devotion, for feelings of admiration, gratitude and love! Outward worship is from this point of view an aid to inward worship, since without it men would be deprived of their best opportunity for worshiping God in spirit and in truth. The outward worship is therefore a kind of preparation, or supplement to the inward worship, and in this respect it is most indispensable to human nature.

My Brethren, let us never forget or neglect God's command to worship and serve Him alone. Our worship must be outward and public, as well as inward and private, or we shall not be worshiping Him in spirit and in truth, and with it we must unite humble reverence and boundless love, that reveals itself chiefly in thankfulness and in zeal to do God's holy Will. In short let us worship Him with our hearts and with our lips. Amen.

9. Idolatry and the Worship of False Gods

By idolatry we mean showing to some animate or inanimate creature the honor and worship due to God alone. We first hear of idolatry on the plain of Sennaar, where the unfinished Tower of Babel was converted into an idolatrous temple. The descendants of Cham were the first to fall into this sin, then those of Japheth, and last of all those of Sem. In every instance where men fall away from God, they lapse into vice, because, apart from Him, they cannot resist the temptations of the flesh, and regard external objects as deities, setting creatures in the place of the one great God. There is a tendency, innate in mankind, to seek symbolical

representation for what they consider divine, whether rightly or wrongly, for they hope thus to render their divinity more real and present. The weaker a man's hold becomes on true religion, the less is he able to retain the knowledge that a symbol is only a symbol, a representation of his idea of God. In his daily life he feels the need of some authority on which his religious and moral acts depend, and unless he is to sink to the level of the brutes, he must have a God. Hence after forsaking the true God, he seeks another deity for himself, and bestows upon it his love and adoration. If the object of his worship is an inanimate mass, we call his form of idolatry fetishism; if it is an animal, we call it animal worship; and if it is one of the heavenly bodies, we call it star worship or Sabianism.

Although the special duty of the Israelites was to preserve and propagate the worship of the true God among nations that had lapsed into idolatry, they often lost sight of their mission, and fell into the vice that they were called to combat. We find traces of idolatry among them even in the time of the patriarchs; for instance, we read that "Rachel stole away her father's idols," and that Jacob "called together all his household, and said: Cast away the strange gods that are among you." During their sojourn in Egypt, the Israelites to some extent adopted the idolatrous practices of the Egyptians, and set up a golden calf as an object of worship on Mount Sinai, although the punishment for idolatry was death by stoning. At a much later date they were still prone to idolatry, and we read that King Solomon, in spite of his wisdom and piety, towards the end of his life built temples to the false gods of his pagan wives. The people were ready enough to follow his bad example, and not only the weak rulers, who succeeded him, but the whole nation fell into idolatry, and persisted in it for a very long

time, in spite of all attempts to bring them back to the true faith. You see how old idolatry is, and how much evil it has caused, but perhaps you do not realize that it is by no means extinct. Even actually upon themselves, the honor, love, esteem and reverence that they owe to God. We probably all know people who are so devoted to their occupations as to think of nothing else; others fall among Christians there are many who bestow upon creatures, and so deeply in love with some fellow creature as to forget their duties of every kind; many care more for Mammon than for God. Among the educated classes people are so utterly blinded by their own learning, that they almost fancy themselves divine. Successful artists, singers and dancers are adored and treated with absurd veneration. May God preserve us from such foolish idolatry! We shall be on our guard against it, if we always call to mind the First Commandment, which bids us worship and serve God alone. If we do this, no creature will be able to turn us away from the true worship and service of God, nor shall we idolize our own selves. The terrible results of idolatry are recorded in history, where we can learn how shameful and injurious they have always been, and these evils should warn us never to forsake the way of faith, hope and charity, but to persevere in the true worship of God. Amen.

10. Superstition

Superstition proceeds from a state of mental confusion, due to ideas incompatible with true religion. It originates in the intellect, and therefore is often the result of ignorance, but as it inevitably destroys sound mental activity, its ultimate cause must be sought in man's falling away from God by sin, for this fall was inseparably connected with darkness and confusion of mind on matters of

religion. The chief forms of superstition affect man in his relation to God, to good and evil spirits, to the Saints and to inanimate objects.

1. In primitive times men used to believe that, in answer to an appeal concerning doubtful matters, God manifested His will by certain signs, thus indicating the guilt or innocence of a person accused of some fault. This belief, or rather superstition, prevailed among all ancient nations, and for a long time even among Christians. Where it was impossible to arrive at a verdict by legal methods, men had recourse to duels, and ordeals of various kinds, and whoever was unsuccessful was considered guilty, although often he was subsequently proved innocent. It was certainly a mistake and a superstition to suppose that God would arbitrate in such cases, and it was presumptuous to expect Him to decide regarding a man's guilt when such tests as these were imposed.

2. A superstitious idea still lingers amongst us that the devil can be induced to enrich individuals on certain conditions. Most extraordinary tales are told on this subject, and those who believe them are tempted to try whether they cannot prevail upon the devil to help them. Others are continually in fear of evil spirits, and dread them especially at certain seasons and in certain places. We cannot help feeling sorry for persons who indulge in such vain hopes and unreasonable fears.

3. There is some amount of superstition mixed up with our veneration and invocation of the saints, so that people imagine any saint, whom they invoke, to be bound to help them, whereas a saint cannot act independently, but only intercedes on our behalf.

4. Things that have been blessed are often put to superstitious uses, and holy water, blessed palms and candles are supposed to

be means whereby desired benefits can be obtained. They were never intended to be thus employed.

5. All sorts of seasons and events are connected with superstitious observances, and there is scarcely a festival on which foolish tales are not told. You all know how eclipses, storms and other natural phenomena are interpreted as foreboding good or evil in the future. All this plainly savors of superstition.

6. It is hardly credible that people at the present day should listen to fortune-tellers and palmists, yet such is the case, and many simpletons believe what any rogue professes to read from a pack of cards. They may be deceived a hundred times and yet they continue to listen.

I might say much more on the subject, but this will suffice to show you that superstition is still prevalent in our midst. However it may manifest itself, it is invariably sinful, because a superstitious person more or less consciously seeks help from evil spirits or inanimate things, and puts faith in them rather than in God.

Be on your guard, therefore, against foolish and sinful tales and practices; you know quite well that there is no real truth or goodness in them. Learn by the experience of others and avoid everything tending to superstition, because it has nothing to do with the faith that brings us to salvation, but involves a falling away from God and our temporal and eternal ruin. May God preserve us all from such a disaster. Amen.

11. Unbelief

That there is great moral laxity spreading amongst all classes is proved by the many unhappy marriages, badly trained children, fraudulent proceedings and immoral actions that abound in our midst. If we seek the causes of this state of affairs, we shall find

that many people have ceased to believe in divine revelation, and so regard everything as permissible that is not directly opposed to public law and order. They may profess to be Christians, but at heart they despise revealed religion, and in deciding between right and wrong are guided only by their own reason, which is often blinded by passion. Nevertheless, by their behavior, and occasionally also by their words, these people show that they still regard themselves as Christians. They are married in church and have their children baptized—sometimes; they are on Sundays present at Mass, and behave as if they were praying; they encourage their subordinates to conform to the practice of Christianity, because they believe the lower classes require some form of positive religion in order to do their duty. If they are in danger of death, they ask for the last sacraments, that they may be regarded as Christians, but should they recover, they trouble no more about religion. In their conversation they profess Christianity, where to do so appears necessary or advantageous. In the society of those who are really Christians by conviction, they join in praising religion, but they adopt a very different tone with persons of their own type. Then they speak of revelations, prophecies and miracles as having no foundation in fact, unless, indeed, they can account for them as due to purely natural causes. They ridicule the credulity of all who genuinely believe in such things, and they try to make others reject all revelation, and accept nothing as true except what commends itself to their own intellect.

It is not difficult to detect unbelievers of this kind. They go to church only for some temporal advantage; they receive the sacraments at most once a year; they never think of saying a prayer or of reading a spiritual book; they look upon all religious ceremonies and observances as superfluous. Their reason approves

and condemns in accordance with the dictates of their passions, and if they commit some abominable action, they plead that it was not a sin, or that it was unavoidable and necessary to their welfare. If they get gain unjustly, it is no more than their due. Sins against chastity are to them only consequences of natural friendship and affection. A sense of honor makes it a duty to avenge themselves upon their enemies. Intemperance is condemned only if it proves injurious to health, but no one looks upon it as a sin. In these or similar ways they excuse all their vices, or even boast of them as virtues.

Beware, my brethren, of unbelief, which ruins men in body and in soul. What scandal is given by an unbeliever! He deprives himself of all consolation and inward happiness in this life, and of all hope for the world to come. He lives like a brute, with no perception of the joys of the spiritual life. As long as he possesses his natural faculties, he may be cheerful, but when he loses them all his courage and happiness disappear and he dies, as a rule, in deep despair. Unbelief causes the greatest misery to individuals, but it has even more disastrous effects on family life. May God preserve us from this great evil. Amen.

12. Veneration of the Saints.

The Catholic Church encourages us to revere and invoke the saints, as in this way we obtain abundant blessings, and, when we look at the saints, we perceive God's greatness and the marvels effected by His grace, and thus acquire increased confidence in His mercy. In the saints the Church gives us models for us to imitate, and teaches us how to follow in their steps along the narrow way that leads to salvation. We learn from them that it is possible for persons of every age, rank and occupation to lead holy lives and to save their souls—and this is the lesson that the Church intends to teach when she bids us venerate the saints in general, and certain saints in particular. May we all appreciate and benefit by this lesson!

The saints deserve both inward and outward veneration because they displayed such exalted virtues. It is natural for us to value what is good and noble and to respect those who are conspicuous for their excellence. In every age such persons have been held in honor. St. Paul, for instance, revered the holy men of the Old Testament. In writing to the Hebrews he commemorates the extraordinary faith of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and others, and we know that the early Christians used to assemble at the tombs of the martyrs to testify their veneration for them. God Himself honored the memory of the saints by assuming the name of "the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," and our Lord Jesus Christ said: "If any man serve me, him will my Father honor" (John, xii, 26).

The saints deserve our veneration also because they are now in glory, for we are bound to honor those whom God has admitted to

the joys of heaven. The veneration that we pay them is paid ultimately to God Himself, for He is honored in His saints just as an earthly ruler is honored when his officials are treated with respect.

In order, however, that our reverence for the saints may be worthy and beneficial, we must not hide it in the depths of our hearts, but display it openly, never thinking, doing or saying anything derogatory to them. At the same time we must take them as our models and try to follow their example. This is why the Church has appointed the eight beatitudes as the Gospel for All Saints' Day, since the beatitudes resemble the steps by which the saints ascended into heaven. If we desire to join them there, we too must with stout hearts persevere in the same ascent, and God's powerful Hand will assist us in our efforts. Yet, in honoring the saints, we must be on our guard against putting them on a level with God or His Divine Son. The difference between them is infinite, inasmuch as God is the Creator and they are His creatures. Christ is the Redeemer and they are the redeemed. We adore God alone, and we ought to honor the saints as our fellow-worshippers and as the friends of God. It is not enough for us to entertain pious thoughts and emotions regarding the saints, or to invoke their aid and show them outward honor; it behooves us to follow their example and to avoid idleness and excess on their festivals. Our reverence for the saints will be pleasing to them and to our heavenly Father only if it makes us more truly pious and virtuous. Amen.

13. The Invocation of the Saints.

We show our reverence for the saints in Heaven chiefly by asking for their intercession. On the subject of invocation of the saints the Catholic Church teaches that "the saints, who reign with

Christ in Heaven, offer their prayers to God for men. It is good and expedient to invoke them and have recourse to their intercession, in order to obtain from God, through Jesus Christ our only Saviour and Redeemer, the graces and benefits that we need." This is the teaching of the Church, and it should put us on our guard against some mistakes and abuses that frequently occur.

That the saints in Heaven pray for us on earth can be proved from the communion existing between them and us. The bond of love between us is not broken but strengthened when they enter Heaven. We read in the book of Zacharias that the angel of the Lord interceded for Jerusalem and the cities of Juda (Zach., i, 12); in the Second Book of Machabees (xv, 14) that the prophet Jeremias, who had been dead a long time, still prayed much for the people and the holy city; and the angel Raphael said to Tobias: "When thou didst pray with tears, I offered thy prayer to the Lord" (Tob., xii, 12). Moreover, St. John writes in the Apocalypse (v, 8) that the four and twenty ancients continually offer the prayers of saints to the Lamb. These passages of Holy Scripture suffice to show how much the saints in Heaven do for us.

It is certainly an advantage to us to invoke the prayers of the saints; they are still connected with us, and God, who is charity, must be pleased at this bond of charity between us. By invoking them we arouse good thoughts within our minds, joy in the Communion of Saints and a desire to imitate their virtues. In this way we learn how we ought to be united in charity with our brethren who are still in this world, and we are reminded of the glorious reward awaiting us in Heaven.

There is no lack of instances in which the intercession of the saints has been of great avail. We know how often Abraham and

Moses prayed for their own people; St. Stephen, when dying, prayed for his enemies, and this prayer caused Saul, a merciless persecutor of the Christians, to be converted and become an apostle. There is not a town or village where the inhabitants do not owe much to the intercession of certain saints.

Yet, as I said before, Christians have to be on their guard against errors and abuses in the invocation of saints. We must not fancy that God is unable or unwilling to help us without their prayers, nor that the saints have any power of themselves to benefit us. It would be a mistake to suppose that we can obtain assistance more readily from them than from God, or that we need but invoke them and all will be well. Such ideas would be an insult to God and displeasing to the saints.

Let us always invoke them as St. Augustine did, when he said: "I beseech you of your charity to be moved by our manifold miseries to make intercession for us. By Him who has chosen you and made you glorious, whose beauty now satisfies you, whose immortality has rendered you immortal, and whose contemplation is now your delight, for His sake, I implore you, ever to be mindful of us; help us in our wretchedness, during our pilgrimage here on earth, that finally we too may attain unto everlasting peace and happiness." Amen.

14. The Veneration and Invocation of Our Blessed Lady.

The Catholic Church, as we have seen, encourages us to venerate and invoke the saints in Heaven, and especially our Blessed Lady, in whose honor several festivals are observed. From the earliest times zealous Christians have always had recourse to the holy Mother of God, and the Fathers with one accord highly commend

this practice. Why do we revere Mary more than all the other saints? Because God chose her from the beginning as our mediatrix and the cause of our redemption; no human being can possibly be compared with her. From Mary the Son of God took flesh and blood and thus became Man; she was and is the Mother of the God-Man, Jesus Christ. There can be no higher dignity than that of being Mother of God, and when we honor the Mother, we honor the Son. Even in the world respect is paid to the mothers of great men, princes, scholars and artists, and Mary deserves peculiar veneration on this account; moreover she is also our own Mother, the Mother of patriarchs and prophets and of all the elect.

She is most worthy of honor on account of her personal virtues and merits, for from her birth she was pure as an angel, free from every stain of sin, and full of boundless humility and steadfast faith. Her associates were most holy people and even heavenly spirits; nothing ever made her impatient or despondent. She was the most perfect of all women, and as such she deserves the highest esteem and honor, and holy Church urges us to pay them to her.

Although Mary is held in such respect by God and man we may ask her intercession, for she continues to love us, and the power of her prayers has often been felt in every age. When we are punished for our sins, we have recourse to her, and by her intercession she has frequently obtained for us alleviation of our sorrows. She is a second Esther with power to secure for us safety from eternal death. Hence we may turn to her in all our troubles of mind and body, but we must not fail to cooperate zealously ourselves, for simple reliance on her intercession leads to the entertainment of rash hopes. Even if our requests are not fulfilled, we must not despond, but trust that God has some wise reason for not giving us what we ask; and submit to His holy will.

As Catholics we honor Mary next after God, and before all other saints, because we know how God singled her out, and that she possessed the greatest virtues and accomplished a noble task. Let us strive to follow her example; if our faith and love resembled hers, we might well hope to find favor in God's sight, and we should give the best evidence of our love for her, and be justified in relying upon her intercession and God's assistance. Amen.

15. Holy Pictures and Statues.

Painting and sculpture are, like oratory and poetry, means of impressing upon men's minds moral truths and the deeds of heroes. When you see the Stations of the Cross beautifully represented, you are moved to sympathize with our Saviour's sufferings, and to realize how much He endured for your sake.

The Church from very early times availed herself of art as a means of instruction, although during the first three centuries, when persecution raged most fiercely, there were no pictures in the churches. This was not because Christians regarded paintings as useless or wrong, but because there were almost no buildings set apart for public worship. The Christians were mostly poor and oppressed, and consequently they limited the accessories of their worship to things strictly necessary and indispensable, spending little upon the artistic ornamentation of buildings that were liable to be destroyed by the pagans at any moment. Moreover, recent converts had gradually to give up the ideas that, as pagans, they had associated with pictures. As early as the second Century tombs and baptistries were adorned with symbolical representations, derived as a rule from Holy Scripture, so that Christ was depicted as the Good Shepherd, and the Holy Ghost as a dove. At the be-

ginning of the fourth century the Christians ventured to build stately churches containing definite representations of Christ, our Lady and other saints. If we ask why they did so, the Fathers and Councils will tell us that pictures were intended both to beautify the churches, and to edify and instruct the faithful. Leontius writes: "Pictures are not our gods, but are open books, which are expounded and reverenced in the Church, in order that the sight of them may dispose us to remember and worship God." Serenus, Bishop of Marseilles, in an excess of zeal tried to banish all pictures from his church, and Pope Gregory I. addressed the following remarkable words to him: "You ought not to have destroyed things which were placed in the churches, not for adoration, but simply for the instruction of the ignorant. It is one thing to worship a statue, and another thing to be impelled by the sight of the statue to worship God; for a picture is to the ignorant what the Scriptures are to those who are able to read." The same Pope wrote to Secundinus: "I am well aware that you desire to have a representation of our Saviour, not in order to pay it divine honors, but that it may help to remind you of God, and kindle within you more ardent love of Him. We do not cast ourselves down before a picture as if it were a deity, but we adore Him only whom it represents." At the great Council of Trent the following decision was pronounced: "Bishops are to give careful instructions that by means of pictures and other symbolic representations of the mysteries of our redemption, the people be kept in continual remembrance of the articles of faith. Moreover, they are to teach that great benefit may be derived from all holy pictures, not only because they remind us of the gifts and favors that we receive through Christ, but also because they keep in our remembrance the miracles wrought by God through the saints, and the virtuous example set

us by these holy men, so that we may thank God for the same, order our way of life on their model, and be stimulated to love and worship God and to practice all virtue. Pictures teach us through our eyes, and so those that we see in churches represent scenes from the history of our redemption and the lives of the saints, they tend to our edification and instruction, awaken feelings of love and gratitude towards God and reverence His saints, and at the same time they serve to adorn our churches. In the eighth century the Emperors of Constantinople, who were iconoclasts, pretended that pictures encouraged idolatry, and tried to banish them from churches and private houses alike, but the Council of Nicaea decided that Christians did not deserve the reproach of idolatry because they worshiped none but God in three Persons, and showed only a relative honor to pictures as representations of Christ and the saints. When Christians kiss pictures, bow them to them, or kneel before them, there is no intention of worshipping, but merely of revering the pictures. If we treat with respect portraits of our parents or of distinguished people, surely the pictures of the saints may be treated in the same way.

You see, my Brethren, why we have statues and pictures in our churches, and why this practice has often been approved and encouraged. Let us therefore refrain from critisizing it, but rather avail ourselves of it, guarding against all abuses and superstitions that may possibly sometimes be connected with it. Amen.

16. Relics of the Saints

Everyone likes to have a keepsake of a departed friend or relative, and things trivial in themselves often assume great value in our sight, and we treasure a lock of hair, a scrap of handwriting, or a picture almost as if it were sacred, renewing our sorrow for the dead as often as we look at it. Probably no one considers this wrong, and there is no reason then for finding fault with the Church for treating with respect the bones and other relics of the saints; in doing so she desires only to express her love and reverence for them, and to remind us of their good example. In honoring relics, we honor the saints themselves, and above all our Lord Jesus Christ, offering them our love, gratitude, prayers and invocations. We think of what they accomplished on earth, of their merits and labors, of their charity towards God and man, of their humility and patience, in short, of the sanctity manifested by them here below, and we are impelled to do our utmost to live as they lived. This is the real meaning of the veneration of relics, and it is with this thought in our minds that we kneel down and pray before them. Let no one imagine that we are worshipping the relics; to kneel in prayer before them is quite different from kneeling in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament; in the former case we testify our respect, in the latter we offer genuine worship to God. Holy Church approves and sanctions the veneration of relics, since thus we enter into relations with the saints, and dispose them to help us; we secure for ourselves their love, protection and intercession, and call to mind their glorious example. In this way the veneration of holy relics may contribute to our salvation. For instance we see our Lady's veil, a relic that we should value very highly, and as we look at it and venerate it, we ought to think of all her virtues, her purity, humility

and charity, and the thought impels us to follow her example and to ask for her intercession, knowing that it is never in vain.

Holy relics may be channels of grace. Our Saviour Himself used outward tokens to convey His grace and power, for instance He cured the sick by a touch. The Church acts in the same way when she administers the sacraments; and relics and holy pictures may also be outward tokens and channels of Divine help and sanctification. It is within our Saviour's power to employ them thus, and He has often chosen to attach His gifts and graces to particular places, objects and pictures. Miraculous cures and conversions have been effected in certain churches by the touch of certain relics, etc. Yet we know that these churches and relics do not possess miraculous powers of themselves, but that God bestows His grace and effects cures at the intercession of the saints whose relics we honor. Let us therefore respect relics in the true spirit of faith, referring our veneration always to the saints themselves, and rendering ourselves worthy of their help by living, as they did, in holiness. Such veneration cannot fail to be beneficial to us. Amen.

THE SECOND COMMANDMENT

17. Reverence for God

Although the Second Commandment is really comprised in the first, which bids us honor and worship God, the matter is of such supreme importance that a special commandment is laid upon us, requiring us to reverence His most Holy Name, and to keep our lawful oaths. God is praised when we boldly proclaim Him to be our salvation. We show our reverence when we attentively and de-

voutly study the word of God, in which His will is made known to us, and strive by every means in our power to become better acquainted with it. We honor His Holy Name when we sing His praises and thank Him for everything, both in joy and in sorrow.

In the Psalms David sang God's praises in the way most pleasing to Him, with gladness of heart, and in the book of Job we have an instance of patience under affliction, since even in the depths of his misery Job never ceased praising God.

We honor the name of the Lord when we call upon Him with confidence and beg Him either to deliver us from our troubles, or to give us strength and courage to bear them. God wishes us to do this, and says: "Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver thee and thou shalt glorify me" (Ps., xlix, 15). Finally we honor God's Name when we call Him to witness our statements.

There are innumerable reasons why we should glorify God. If we consider the faculties that He has given us, the wise laws controlling the world, and the marvellous dispensations of His providence, we cannot help feeling admiration. The consciousness of being the highest of His creatures, destined for eternal life and enriched with countless graces and benefits, which procure us happiness in this life and lead on to everlasting bliss,—this consciousness must fill us with a sense of most profound gratitude. The frailty of human nature, our tendency to evil and our constant craving to act in accordance with our carnal desires rather than God's law, are enough, when we think of them, to make us very humble.

The contemplation of all His wonderful works, His goodness toward man, the prophecies fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ and the miracles wrought by Him, should strengthen our faith. The thought of God's infinite perfections and His fidelity to His

promises must needs increase our hope that He will not refuse us the means of attaining our final end.

God's boundless love for man and the proofs of it, far beyond our comprehension though they may be, that He gives us, especially in the mystery of the Redemption and the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, cannot fail to call forth in us a love of Him containing in itself sentiments of admiration, gratitude and veneration.

The sense of our connection with and dependence upon God impels us to worship Him as the source of all goodness and power. You see that God wishes us to honor Him and His Holy Name, and that we have innumerable reasons for doing so. Let us therefore make it our delight to comply with His will and often utter His Name with reverence and strive in all that we do to give honor to the Father, Son and Holy Ghost. Amen.

18. Blasphemy

The Second Commandment forbids desecration of God's Holy Name by uttering it irreverently, by mocking at religion, by blasphemy, by sinful cursing and swearing, and by breaking oaths and vows. Many Christians do not hesitate to pronounce the name of God lightly, both in jest and in anger. People who do this forget that Moses says: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain" (Ex., xx, 7). The most grievous desecration of God's Holy Name and of sacred things is caused by blasphemy, *i. e.*, by contemptuous or abusive language regarding them. Blasphemy may be committed in thought as well as in word and action. King Manasses was guilty of this sin when he set up an idolatrous image in the temple of God (2 Paral., xxxiii, 7); and King Antiochus ventured to enter the Holy Place and to handle and profane the holy vessels (2 Mach., v, 15, 16). Julian the

Apostate was mortally wounded by a spear-thrust during a battle in Phrygia, but he drew the weapon from the wound and hurled it toward Heaven, exclaiming: "Thou hast conquered, O Galilean," this being his contemptuous name for Christ. On one occasion he met a Christian and asked him: "What is the Galilean carpenter's son about?" The Christian answered: "He is hammering the planks for thy coffin."

Another emperor, Constantine Copronymus, who refused to pay any honor to Mary, once showed his courtiers a purse full of money, and asked them what they thought it was worth. They replied that it was probably worth a great deal. Then he took out the money and asked them the same question again. They said that now the purse was worth little or nothing. "You see," he cried blasphemously, "how it is with Mary. As long as she carried Christ in her womb, she was worthy of all honor and esteem, but after His birth she was no better than any other woman."

Episodes of this kind have occurred in every age, and they are by no means rare now. A farmer, whose corn was being beaten down by a storm, cried: "Go on; in spite of all I shall eat wheat cakes." A poor widow, who had not received some money that she expected, turned the Crucifix round, as it hung on the wall of her room, and said angrily: "As I got no assistance, I shall not pray to you any more." A doctor, who was a notorious atheist, pulled down a Crucifix that hung above his patient's bed, and flung it on the floor, saying: "That thing cannot cure you, it is *my* business to get you well." We sometimes hear people declare that there is no God, that they are not going to trouble about Him, that He never works miracles now, etc., etc. Blasphemers have always tried to induce others to follow their example, but they have never met with much

success. St. Ephraim once rebuked such an offender thus: "Dost thou dare to open thy lips against Almighty God, whom the angels behold with awe? To-morrow thou mayst stand before His judgment seat; how then canst thou venture to-day to utter such words? Art thou not afraid that fire will fall from heaven, or the earth open and swallow thee up?"

In preaching at Antioch to people who recklessly dishonored God, St. John Chrysostom said: "Do you not know who God is and how He ought to be mentioned? If anyone abuses an honest man we tell him to wash his mouth before naming him; and yet you presume lightly and wickedly to speak of God, who is worthy of all reverence, and before whom both angels and devils tremble." There are in Holy Scripture many explicit warnings against blasphemy. We have seen that Moses said: "The Lord will not hold him guiltless that shall take the name of the Lord his God in vain." Elsewhere we read: "The Lord spoke to Moses, saying: 'Bring forth the blasphemer without the camp, and let them that heard him put their hands upon his head, and let all the people stone him. The man that curseth his God, shall bear his sin'" (Lev., xxiv, 13-15). Because David gave occasion to God's enemies to blaspheme, the prophet Nathan was sent to foretell the death of his child (2 Kings, xii, 14). Our Divine Lord said: "Every sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven men, but the blasphemy of the Spirit shall not be forgiven" (Mat., xii, 31). Blasphemers are not spared either in the Old or in the New Testament. In the early Church they were expelled from the Christian community, and for seven successive Sundays had to stand outside the church during Divine worship and fast on bread and water for seven Fridays. Even the secular law punishes blasphemy. King Louis IX of France ordered blasphemers to be branded with a hot iron on both lips, and in some

countries they are now condemned to imprisonment with hard labor.

May God preserve us all from the fearful sin of blasphemy! Let us resolve never to insult Him and His saints by thought, word or deed, and never to ridicule holy things. Far be it from us ever to despise or curse Almighty God; there is no forgiveness for this awful sin, and God will not allow Himself to be mocked. Let us on the contrary say with all our heart: Hallowed be Thy name now and for evermore. Amen.

19. Curses

The use of curses and bad language is a breach of the Second Commandment. As a rule men offend thus under the influence of violent anger, which causes physical disturbance and finds an outlet in abusive words and curses. Unless this evil tendency is stifled at once, and unless men practice strict self-control, they will be liable to sudden outbursts of fury. The habit of giving way to bad language is one that every person, and especially every Christian, ought to do his best to overcome, since it is an insult to God; and whoever presumes to give vent to his anger in this way rebels against his Creator and forgets the relation in which he stands to Him. He forgets that it is his duty to control his passions, and assumes an attitude unbecoming a creature. Moreover, as those who use bad language generally swear by God or by holy things, their words are blasphemous and involve dishonor to His Holy Name. Such language is also a wrong done to one's neighbor, since it destroys the bond of charity that should unite men, and no one can utter abusive words without despising and insulting others. However much reason anyone may have for complaint, he must not indulge in abuse, for not only is this a hideous vice, but it is in direct

opposition to the law that requires a Christian to forgive his enemies, to love them and do them good, as if he had suffered no wrong at their hands.

Bad language is particularly disgraceful when addressed to animals or inanimate objects. What can be worse than to swear at a horse for not doing what you want? Do you expect him to be guided by reason? Are you reasonable in expecting rational actions of him? Sometimes human beings in their folly treat animals in a manner that shows them to be far lower than the creatures whom they ill treat, and surely nothing can be more insane than to lose one's temper with some tool or inanimate thing, to which no blame can possibly be imputed.

A man who uses bad language lowers himself in the esteem of his fellows. One who indulges in foul abuse has lost all self-control and displays openly all sorts of faults and weaknesses which he would carefully conceal if he had any regard for his own reputation. We soon cease to respect a man who allows his anger to get the upper hand, so that he swears at others.

For a superior to abuse an inferior is most unseemly, and the higher his position, the worse is his offense and the more disastrous are its results. Yet many persons in authority consider themselves entitled to swear at their subordinates, and have no scruple about doing so, although they ought certainly to control themselves if they wish to win affection. Nothing is more destructive of good feeling and confidence than unrestrained and harsh language. The subordinates dare not retaliate, but they lose all respect for their employer and obey him only because they must; and where it is possible to deceive him they do so.

A parent, more perhaps than anyone else, is bound to refrain

from abusing his children, and yet how many not only swear at them, but try to justify themselves by arguing that children need to be frightened in order to learn obedience. We know by experience that parents of this kind never attain their end, for the more they swear and rage, the more unruly do their children become, and any obedience paid to them is merely outward. The reason for this is that the children soon begin to despise their parents, who thus forfeit all claim to respect. It is no easy matter even for good and conscientious people to train their children well, but where there is an obvious discrepancy between example and precept, children are quick to notice it and to refuse obedience.

Reason and experience teach that environment is of the utmost importance, especially in the case of the young, and a child who hears his parents use bad language will follow their example, even against their wishes and orders. If they desire to prevent him from acquiring this bad habit they must abandon it themselves, otherwise they will try in vain to cure him, and God will hold them responsible for not going to the root of the matter and striving by a good example to inculcate what they teach.

If we remonstrate with a man who swears and point out to him the real meaning of his words, he is sure to say that he has no intention of offending God—but how futile is this excuse! Do not the words, which the lips utter, express the thoughts of the heart? If he does not think what he says, what is the significance of his words? Beware of thinking it a light thing to use bad language; you cannot undo the evil by simply saying afterwards that you spoke angrily and without due reflection. Take to heart St. Peter's warning not to render evil for evil, nor railing for railing, but contrariwise, blessing. Let us never forget that bad language is an insult to God and

our neighbor, and robs us of all confidence and respect. Keep a careful watch over your lips and beware of forming the habit of swearing whenever anything displeases you.

20. Oaths

When we take an oath, we call God to witness some promise or statement. There are many kinds of oaths, but all have this in common, that we appeal to the almighty, just, and holy God in support of what we are saying. For an oath to be binding it is not necessary to raise one's right hand nor to kiss the Bible, nor to have a crucifix and two lighted candles on the table—such things are used to add solemnity to an oath. We can take an oath either by word of mouth or in writing, and it will be equally binding upon us. In any case it has a religious significance, since, when we take an oath, we acknowledge our belief in God's omniscience, sanctity and justice, and testify our reverence for Him.

Any form of words in which we call God to witness our statements or promises is an oath, but more is required if the oath is to be valid and sacred; the prophet Jeremias says: "Thou shalt swear in truth and in judgment and in justice" (iv, 2).

(a) We must swear *in truth*, and be fully convinced that what we say is absolutely true. A promissory oath must also be true, since one who promises to do anything must fully intend to keep his word. No honest man will ever pledge himself to do what is contrary to God's will, but when he has once sworn to do what he believes to be right and in accordance with the commandments, he will never seek to evade his obligation, unless indeed circumstances should change so completely that by keeping his oath he would offend God and incur His wrath. King David tells us that the man

who sweareth to his neighbor and deceiveth not shall not be moved forever.

(b) We must swear *with judgment* and consideration, after due reflection and not hastily or carelessly. Before taking an oath every one ought to think whether it is really necessary or not, and whether the matter requires it. He must take into account the time, place and other circumstances and avoid being influenced by feelings of affection or hatred. Unless he is sure that the matter is serious and that an oath is necessary, he should not take it. It is quite common for people to swear about things that are of very little importance, merely from habit, without any reason at all, and this is most reprehensible.

(c) Above all things we must swear *in justice,* especially when making promises, for if we bind ourselves by an oath to do what is unjust, we sin, first, by taking such an oath, and, secondly, by keeping it. We have an instance of a rash oath taken by King Herod, who inadvertently pledged himself to give the dancing girl St. John the Baptist's head. A similar oath was taken by some Jews who swore neither to eat nor drink until they had killed St. Paul.

After what has been said as to the requirements for an oath, there can be no doubt that it is permissible for a man to swear, provided that he observes the rules laid down. God Himself allowed the Israelites to swear, for we read in Exodus (xxii, 10, 11) that where no eye-witnesses can be produced, statements may be made on oath. Moreover, on more than one occasion we read that God swore by Himself to fulfil His promises (Gen., xxii, 16). David swore not to kill Semei (2 Kings, xix, 23), and to appoint Solomon to be his successor (3 Kings, i, 30). In the Epistle to the Romans (i, 9) St.

Paul calls God to witness his words. We see, therefore, that we may take oaths, but only regarding important matters.

Whoever, having taken an oath, fails to speak the truth or to keep his promise, is guilty of perjury, which is a grievous sin against God, as well as an offense punishable by law. In order to appreciate duly the enormity of the sin of perjury, you need only reflect upon the actions of a man who is guilty of it. He not only utters a lie, but he calls God to witness that his lie is true. Is this not an awful crime? He knows that his words are false, and yet appeals to Him, who is all-truth, to testify to their truth. It is impossible to deceive God, who reads our innermost thoughts—and a perjurer renounces formally all claim to His grace and help, when he says: "So help me God," he means that he does not expect God to help him if his assertion is untrue, well knowing that it is so. Some people actually invite the devil to carry them off, if what they say is false. You can see for yourselves what a terrible sin perjury is. It is punished by the State, when it results in injury to others, and a violation of the oath of allegiance may involve the death penalty. You all know how men look down on one who is a traitor, and what misery his crime brings on everyone connected with him. Perjury in a court of justice is regarded as contempt and as an insult to the government. The harm caused by perjury is often irreparable; innocent persons have suffered the loss of honor, money, employment and even life, through the perjury of false witnesses. An honest man is grieved if, by speaking the truth, he is forced to injure his neighbor, but how abominable is the cruelty displayed by one who, to gratify his lust for vengeance or for the sake of gain, swears falsely and thus robs another of life or of his good name and possessions! One would suppose such a crime to be almost impos-

sible amongst Christians, and yet it is frequently committed. At the time of the French Revolution many people were put to death for offences of which they were innocent on the evidence of false witnesses, who were no better than thieves and murderers. It is bad enough when a perjurer causes loss to another, and he can seldom be induced to confess his sin, but God will never forgive it until reparation is made.

My Brethren, beware of false oaths and speak the simple truth at all times, so that you may not be tempted to corroborate a lie with an oath. If ever you utter a falsehood, be on your guard against adding to your guilt by swearing falsely that what you say is true. Before taking an oath reflect on what you are about to do and refrain altogether from swearing to a statement unless you are convinced of its truth. If you are on oath, have recourse to no ambiguity and no reservation. Before you bind yourselves to do anything consider carefully whether you have the means and ability to keep your word, and remember that, when you are pledged, it is a most solemn duty to perform what you have promised, since God requires you to respect the sanctity of an oath. **Amen.**

21. Vows

We are all very fickle, constantly making good resolutions and then breaking them, and neglecting even the good works that the Commandments require of us. In order to strengthen their will and renew their zeal, Christians sometimes make a vow, i. e., they make a solemn, voluntary and deliberate promise to God to do some good work.

1. A vow is a solemn promise, not merely a good resolution, which gives no one else a right to claim its fulfilment from us. If any one accepts our promise, he is entitled to call upon us to keep our word.

2. A vow is made voluntarily, not under threats or compulsion, for then it would not be binding, because a person who acts under compulsion has no will to pledge himself.

3. A vow is made deliberately, with full knowledge of what it involves, for no one can promise to do what he does not understand. He must examine his own abilities and see whether they will enable him to keep his word. Ignorance, error and fear may render a vow invalid.

4. A vow is a promise made to God, therefore it is a kind of worship; and just as we can worship God alone, so to Him alone we make vows.

5. It is a promise pleasing to God, being a voluntary sacrifice. For instance He accepted the vows made by Jacob the patriarch and Anna, and granted their requests. Jacob made a vow, saying: "If God shall be with me . . . and I shall return prosperously to my father's house, the Lord shall be my God . . . and of all things that thou shalt give me, I will offer tithes to thee" (Gen., xxviii,

20-22). Anna made a vow, saying: "O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt be mindful of me, and not forget thy handmaid, and wilt give to thy servant a man child, I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life" (1 Kings, i, 11).

6. Finally, a vow is a promise to do some good work, something tending to moral improvement or sanctification of life, for only works of this kind are means of glorifying God.

Every genuine promise is binding, provided that the person to whom it is made accepts it. We cannot possibly doubt that a good work, resulting in improvement of human life, is pleasing to God, and that He accepts the promise to perform it; hence if we make a vow, we are bound to keep it. Moses said: "That which is once gone out of thy lips, thou shalt observe, and shalt do as thou hast promised to the Lord thy God" (Deut., xxiii, 23). With regard to the time within which a vow must be kept, it depends upon whether any definite date was mentioned in the vow. If so, the vow must be kept at that date; if not, as soon as circumstances allow. If any one makes a conditional vow, it is not binding until the conditions mentioned are fulfilled. There may be cases in which it is impossible to keep a vow, and then it ceases to bind. For instance, a man may vow to make a pilgrimage at some definite time, but in consequence of severe illness he is practically incapable of undertaking it, or the place, whither he intended to go, may be occupied by enemies; his vow is not binding. Occasionally under the influence of anxiety or distress a vow is made, which it is either impossible or extremely dangerous to fulfil, or of which the fulfilment is forbidden by parents and superiors. In such cases the vow is probably not binding, but the person who has made it must not dispense himself or commute his vow for something else. He must lay the

matter before a priest and take his advice. The Church alone has power to dispense from vows, since Christ gave the Apostles authority to bind and to loose, and to order everything affecting the moral welfare of the faithful.

From all that has been said, you will see how important it is to be cautious in making vows, but when you have made one, you must regard it as sacred, and fulfil it both for God's glory and the good of your own soul. Amen.

THE THIRD COMMANDMENT

22. The Observance of Sundays and Holy Days

The Third Commandment shows us what outward service we owe to God. It is as it were the outcome of the Second Commandment, for if we honor God devoutly, putting our faith and hope in Him, we must inevitably give expression to our veneration and gratitude, and, in order that those engaged in secular occupations may have an opportunity of doing this, definite days are set apart for the worship of God. The Third Commandment agrees with the voice of nature which prompts us to devote certain hours to this purpose. All nations observe days dedicated to religious practices. Human beings assign definite hours to sleep, meals and bodily refreshment, and it is equally natural to devote time to the refreshment of the mind by the worship and contemplation of God. We are morally bound to employ a portion of our time in this way, and therefore the Apostles determined to dedicate the first day of the week, which they called the Lord's day, to the special worship of God.

What is enjoined by the words "Remember that thou keep holy the Sabbath day?"

The word "Remember" is placed at the beginning of the commandment, because the sanctification of the day formed part of the Jewish ceremonial. The remaining words show us that we should arrange our business during the week so as to be free on one day to give an account to God of our proceedings; and it follows that we ought to do nothing that He would condemn or that would disturb our minds and make us fear His displeasure. "Sabbath" is a Hebrew word meaning rest, and the seventh day was so called because, after creating the universe, God rested on that day. In Holy Scripture the Jews were taught to keep the Sabbath day holy, and not only to refrain from work. The true meaning of sanctifying the Sabbath is to observe it as a day of rest, when man is free to worship and serve God. Why was it expedient for the Jews to be ordered to keep the Sabbath holy? The seventh day was appointed partly to prevent each man from selecting a day to suit himself, but partly for another mystical reason. God said to Moses: "Let the children of Israel keep the Sabbath; . . . it is an everlasting covenant between me and the children of Israel, and a perpetual sign." "See that thou keep my Sabbath, because it is a sign between me and you, . . . that you may know that I am the Lord, who sanctify you." The Sabbath was therefore a sign indicating that men ought to dedicate themselves to God. It was a memorial also of the creation, and it was intended to remind the Jews that by God's help they had escaped from captivity in Egypt. Finally it suggests to us the rest and peace of Heaven. To a Christian the spiritual Sabbath is a holy, mystical calm, when the old man, that was buried with Christ, is raised to newness of

life, and engages actively in the practice of virtue. The Heavenly Sabbath is, as St. Cyril says, our life with Christ, when we shall enjoy all good things and sin will be no more, since the souls of the saints obtain everything through the contemplation of God.

In addition to the Sabbath there were other festivals serving to remind the Jews of the benefits which God had bestowed upon them. The Catholic Church transferred the solemn worship from the Sabbath to the Lord's Day; it was on the first day of the week that light shone upon the world, and in the same way our Saviour, by rising again on that day, opened to us the gate of everlasting life, bringing us from darkness into light. The Apostles called the first day of the week "the Lord's day," and it is plain from the Holy Scripture that this day was solemnly observed, both because creation began then, and also because the Holy Ghost came down upon the disciples on this day. The Apostles and the Fathers from the earliest times insisted that it was the duty of Christians to commemorate with reverence and gratitude the benefits that God has bestowed upon us. The days dedicated to the commemoration of the mysteries of our redemption are our greatest festivals, taking precedence of those consecrated to our Lady, the Apostles, martyrs and other saints. On days of the latter class we should glorify God for His goodness and power, pay due honor to the saints, and be spurred on to follow their holy example.

From the words, "Six days shalt thou labor," we should learn that we must not spend our life in idleness, but work diligently, arranging our occupations so as not to leave for Sunday anything that ought to be done on the other days of the week, lest it prove a distraction or hindrance to our worship of God. The third commandment continues: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the

Lord thy God; thou shalt do no work on it, thou nor thy son, nor thy daughter, nor thy man-servant, nor thy maid-servant, nor thy beast, nor the stranger that is within thy gates." This shows us that we ought to avoid everything likely to interfere with the service of God. By servile work we understand such work as is generally done for wages by servants and laborers. The spirit of the law is more important, however, than the letter, and we ought certainly to include amongst the forbidden works all such forms of amusement as are dangerous to good morals and purity of life. In cases where servile work is a real necessity, it may be done on Sundays and holy days. Our Lord Himself taught that it was permissible, for He said: "Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fall into a pit, and will not immediately draw him out on the Sabbath day?" (Luke xiv, 5). It was decided by the Council of Trent that work done to avert impending loss did not desecrate the Lord's day. Hence we are allowed to do what is necessary for the nourishment of our bodies, and we may even work in the fields in times of special emergency or distress. We are bound to go to church on Sundays and holy days, and to hear Mass with attention and devotion. We ought frequently to receive the Sacraments and listen to sermons, since nothing is more unseemly than for a Christian to despise the Word of God. We should be zealous in offering prayer and praise to God, and in learning whatever may help us to lead a truly Christian life. Further, we ought to do works of charity, giving alms to the poor, visiting the sick and consoling the sorrowful.

Those who are precise in their observance of the Third Commandment, and walk before Him and find their delight in converse with Him, are best able to contemplate His majesty when they pray, and to hear His voice in sermons; whereas those who disobey God

and the Church are His enemies and will not escape punishment.

My brethren, let us praise and thank God for giving us this commandment; let us never forget it or fail to obey it, but resolve to sanctify Sundays and holy days by refraining from hard work that is unnecessary, and by devoting our time to the service of God. Let us carefully avoid all evil and do nothing displeasing to Him, and then we shall be admitted to rest forever in Heaven with God and all His saints. Amen.

THE FOURTH COMMANDMENT

23. The Duties of Children Towards their Parents

The first three commandments are of the utmost importance, but those that follow are rightly esteemed inferior only to them. The former refer solely to God, the latter instruct us in the duty that we owe to our neighbor, although ultimately they also refer to God, since we are to love our neighbor for His sake. This is why Christ said that the two great commandments, inculcating respectively love of God and love of man, were alike. The Fourth Commandment refers not only to our parents, but also to other people whom we are bound to honor, especially to teachers and to our civil and ecclesiastical superiors, who aim at making us lead respectable, God-fearing lives. We ought to treat our parents with love and reverence, but the most essential thing is to love and worship God, the Father and Creator of all things, and we should love our parents so that the whole force of our love reverts to our Father in Heaven.

What is the meaning of the word honor in this commandment? When we honor anyone, we think of him with respect, and set a high value on everything connected with him. Honor of this kind involves also love, reverence and obedience. We ought of course to love and respect our parents, but there is a particular reason why the Fourth Commandment bids us honor them. They are God's representatives, to whom we owe our existence and our religious and moral training. Therefore we should treat them with a respect that is the outcome of our love and gratitude. They have spared themselves no trouble, labor and danger on our behalf, and their best reward will be the knowledge of their children's affection.

There are other ways of honoring our parents: we can pray that they may prosper and be esteemed in this world, and that they may find favor with God and the saints in Heaven. We honor them also if we act in accordance with their wishes and imitate their good qualities, not only asking, but also following their advice. We honor them, if we help them and supply their wants, especially in time of sickness, and see that they are not deprived of the Sacraments, or of friends to visit and encourage them. It behooves us to take care that our parents enjoy all the consolations of religion when death approaches, so that they may welcome him as a friend, and not dread him as an enemy, and, when they have passed away, it is our duty to provide for suitable funeral, to have Masses said, and to carry out their wishes regarding their possessions.

The reward of long life is promised to children who honor their parents, because they deserve to enjoy for a long time the benefits for which they show their gratitude. On the other hand those who do not respect their parents are threatened with punishment. "He that curseth his father or mother, shall die the death" (Ex. xxi,

17). "He that afflicteth his father and chaseth away his mother is infamous and unhappy" (Prov. xix, 26). "The eye that mocketh at his father and that despiseth the labor of his mother . . . let the ravens eat it" (Prov. xxx, 17). We read of many instances in which God's wrath was kindled against those who wronged their parents: e. g., Absalom was punished for rebelling against David. As long as your parents are alive, show that you obey God's commandment and honor them; treat them with respect and defer to their wishes at once, not waiting for them to beg you to do so. Obey their legitimate orders promptly, and not in a grudging spirit. Speak of them politely, and do not allow others to criticize or insult them. Never be ashamed of them, even if they be poor, infirm, or obscure. Help them as much as you can in old age, sickness and poverty, and then you may hope to enjoy a long and happy life. Amen.

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24. The Duties of Subordinates Toward their Superiors

In every age there have been people ready to maintain that man is subject to no secular authority, but only to God, and consequently he owes the State no respect, obedience, loyalty or service, since these things are due to God alone. Such theories are quite mistaken, for there always has been, and always must be, some superior authority. Just as every human being is made up of body and soul, so must the ruling power be temporal or secular and spiritual. Holy Scripture and the Catholic religion teach us that all authority was instituted by God. Through Solomon God said: "By me princes rule, and the mighty decree justice" (Prov., viii, 15); and St. Paul writes: "Let every soul be subject to higher

powers, for there is no power but from God . . . therefore he that resisteth the power, resisteth the ordinance of God; and they that resist purchase to themselves damnation" (Rom., xiii, 1, 2). Hence we are all bound to respect, obey and serve those in authority, with loyalty, devotion and zeal.

1. In the first place we must respect them, looking upon them as God's representatives, recognizing their right to be treated with courtesy and deference on our part. Our respect should be genuine and not hypocritical. St. Paul says: "Render to all men their dues, . . . fear to whom fear (is due), honor to whom honor" (Rom. xiii, 7).

2. We must obey those in authority; they have to look after the welfare of their subjects, and consequently laws are necessary, for the good of the whole community as well as of individuals. In writing to the Colossians St. Paul says: "Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh; not serving to the eye, as pleasing men, but in simplicity of heart, fearing God" (iii, 22). Should, however, a superior order his subordinate to do anything wrong, he can exact no obedience, for we must obey God rather than man.

3. We owe loyalty and devotion to our superiors. Loyalty is displayed by a punctual and prompt discharge of all duties, and consequently all officials must do their utmost to promote the public good. They work for the benefit of the nation in general, and so it is only fair that we should conform to their regulations. Our Lord set us an example in this respect when He paid tribute for Himself and St. Peter, even working a miracle for the purpose. Just as good children are devoted to their parents and teachers, so should subjects be devoted to their rulers, and never take part

in any rebellion or insurrection. Such things have been proved by experience never to cause anything but harm, and they are condemned by God, who ordered the earth to open and swallow up Core, Dathan and Abiron, because they rebelled against Moses, their lawful ruler (Num., xvi).

You see therefore that we owe respect, loyalty, obedience and devotion to those set over us, and no one can think himself exempt from this obligation, if he really desires to love God and his fellow-men, for these duties are imposed upon us by God as well as by nature.

St. Paul sums up the duties of Christian servants to their employers in a few weighty words, that should never be forgotten. He says: "Exhort servants to be obedient to their masters, in all things pleasing, not gainsaying, not defrauding, but in all things showing good fidelity, that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things" (Titus, ii, 9, 10). Thus it behooves every Christian servant to obey his employer, and to be obliging, faithful and honest. Amen.

25. The Duties of Parents Towards Their Children

Innate in every father and mother is a consciousness that, as they have brought children into the world, it is their duty to love and care for them. That this consciousness exists is certain, and we have only to consider what form this love and care should take.

Parents who truly love their children are always anxious to promote their real welfare in every possible way, and as a child has both body and soul, a parent should strive to promote the welfare of both. His body requires food and clothing to preserve its health and give it endurance and strength, and parents are bound to care for a child from the first moment of his existence, guarding him from anything that could injure him in mind or body. They must supply him with food and other necessaries as long as he is weak and helpless, and also provide for his further maintenance, either by training him to earn his own livelihood, or by furnishing him with an income. Parents who do not regard it as a duty to make provision for their children are worse than animals, for these never neglect their young. Far more important, but far more difficult is it to provide for a child's spiritual welfare; since this requires careful training of mind and heart. Parents must instruct their children in the truths of religion, and also give them sufficient secular education to make their way in the world. They must teach them to control their passions, to love goodness and hate sin. They must bring them up to be good Catholics and useful citizens, and where parents are for any reason incapable of doing this themselves, it is their duty to entrust their children to the care of such people only as are fit to take their place, and willing and able to undertake the difficult task of education. It is a higher duty to provide for the

spiritual than for the corporeal welfare of the young, since the soul is of more value than the body.

Although, as I have said, nature has implanted in the heart and mind of every parent a sense that it is his duty to look after his children, this duty is only too often neglected at the present day, when many by the excesses and irregularity of their lives cause their children to be sickly and miserable; whilst others are so unnatural as to hand them over to others as soon as they are born, and grudge every penny spent upon them. Children are often deprived of necessaries, either because their parents are so extravagant and self-indulgent as to waste all their money, or because they are too mean to buy what is required. Many grow up deformed or crippled in body for want of care and proper nourishment, or because they have been spoilt and pampered in their youth. All this is bad enough, but far more reprehensible still are those who neglect or even deliberately undermine the spiritual welfare of their children, for by their sinful indulgence they encourage all manner of defects, vices and passions, and are blind to all faults in them. Sometimes children are withdrawn from all religious and moral instruction, and sent to schools where they learn little but evil. It is a disgrace to Christianity and to humanity that any parents should so utterly ignore their duty as to encourage, and even command, their children to do wrong, simply in order to make money and gratify their vanity and avarice.

It is not too much to say that the neglect of parental obligations causes incalculable harm, for it is impossible to assign any limits to its disastrous results.

When this neglect injures the bodies of the young, the whole State suffers, since it loses strong, vigorous citizens, and has to provide for an army of cripples and imbeciles, or in many cases

for criminals. When their moral and religious training is neglected, the State and the Church both suffer, for how can children turn out well, when they are allowed to grow up in ignorance and vice? What can we expect of them but disloyalty, disobedience and obstinacy? A man whose parents have permitted him to be unruly and disobedient as a boy, is very apt to be a rebel and a traitor. A good citizen cannot be a disloyal subject, but it is very improbable that a boy, who has never been subjected to any discipline, will ever prove a good citizen, or learn to respect obligations that he has always disregarded. If as a child he has not been taught to be just, honest and God-fearing, he is not likely to develop into a respectable man. How should he shrink from deliberate fraud and deception, if his parents have never corrected him for telling lies? How should he be willing to help the poor and needy, and to treat his neighbors justly, if his parents have never taught him the lessons of self-control and charity? Every day we see the disastrous results of parental neglect, and many parents must feel bitter shame and sorrow when they realize how completely they have failed in their duty. Fathers and mothers who neglect the moral and religious training of their children, and who entrust them to bad, unscrupulous teachers, are playing into the hands of the devil, who delights in sowing the seeds of wickedness, unbelief and hatred of all that is good, especially in the hearts of the young.

It is but fair that the evil results of their neglect should be felt by parents, and many have to mourn over the disgrace and trouble cast upon them by their children, many complain that in their old age they receive no help, but only unkindness and insults, from those whom they have brought into the world.

To the parents present here I would say, remember that you cannot neglect your obligation to love and care for your children, with-

out at the same time imperilling their welfare and your own, and the prosperity of Church and State. You are strictly responsible to God and your fellow-countrymen for the manner in which you bring up your children. Let this be both a warning and encouragement to you, and make you resolve to be faithful to your duties, and not only to love your children, but to provide for their bodily and spiritual welfare; thus laying up for yourselves happiness hereafter, and winning the esteem and gratitude of your fellow-citizens and the approval of Almighty God. Amen.

26. The Duties of Rulers and Superiors

Human society cannot exist without an organized form of Government, to uphold peace and good order and to protect men's persons and property. This fact was recognized very early, for even Solomon says: "Where there is no governor, the people shall fall." There must be a head even to a small household, and to wish that it were possible to dispense with rulers is foolish. The power that they possess is derived from God. He allows men to determine the manner in which rulers are appointed, but as soon as anyone attains to supremacy in any lawful way, he is empowered by God to rule. A ruler's power is legislative, judicial and executive. He must make and enforce good laws, and do his best to prevent and suppress anything that disturbs or may disturb the peace of the country, taking all reasonable care for its preservation. He must reward virtue and punish vice, and administer the revenues justly for the common good. He is bound to set his subjects a good example, remembering that he is not exempt from the obligation to love his neighbors. Every man is made in the likeness of God, and therefore is entitled to love and esteem from all, whether high or low. Hence St. Paul warns his converts to be of one mind one towards

another; not minding high things, but consenting to the humble (Rom., xii, 16). Those in authority should remember the importance of setting a good example to their subordinates. If they do things that are forbidden to others, their inferiors will respect neither them nor the law, and will consider themselves at liberty to transgress it. The words: "You are the salt of the earth," addressed by Christ to His Apostles, are applicable also to all in authority.

Rulers have to discharge many difficult duties for the good of the State and of individuals, and they should remember St. Paul's advice: "Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col., iv, 1). Servants are human beings like their employers, and generally it is only the accident of birth that decides who are to give orders and who are to carry them out. Every one, who employs another to work for him, should bear this fact in mind, and treat his servant with consideration. Those who are blessed with this world's goods often fancy that they can purchase the service of others who are in a humbler position, but this is a mistake that has caused masters to ill-treat their subordinates, and to assume that the fact of paying them wages confers upon employers the right to deal with them arbitrarily. Whatever the relation between master and servant may be, no Christian can ever think that it justifies him in dealing rudely or uncharitably with those in his employ. On this point common sense and Christianity are at one, and both bid us regard masters and men alike as human beings. Let every master treat his servant as he would wish to be treated, were their positions reversed.

Just as servants have various duties towards their masters, so have masters certain duties towards their servants; some affecting their temporal and others their spiritual welfare. A master is bound

to feed his servants properly; to pay them their wages when due; to treat them with consideration; to provide for their instruction; to watch over their moral behavior, to set them a good example, and to remember that they are his neighbors, whom he must love as such.

These are the duties of masters towards their servants, whose welfare they are bound to further. In conclusion I will once more quote St. Paul's words: "Masters, do to your servants that which is just and equal, knowing that you also have a Master in heaven" (Col., iv, 1). Amen.

THE FIFTH COMMANDMENT

27. Thou Shalt Not Kill

The Fifth Commandment forbids any one to strike, wound or kill another human being. Murder is a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance, and causes the greatest misery, since murderers are enemies to the human race, and, as far as they are able, they destroy God's creation, for He created all things for the benefit of man. When they kill, they lay violent hands on those made in God's likeness, and unlawfully rob them of life. Life when once destroyed can never be restored, and consequently no man can suffer a more grievous loss than that of life. A murderer can never be at peace; Cain was an outcast from the hour of Abel's death; wherever he went, he seemed to see his brother's corpse and hear his cry for vengeance. Murder is punished both by God and man, and it is in accordance with God's will that murderers should be put to death, and, if they die impenitent, they will be cast for ever into hell. Because killing a man robs him of his most precious possession, God has most strictly forbidden it, and it is permissible in

only three cases:—1. A judge may condemn a murderer to death; 2. A man may kill another in self-defence; 3. A soldier may kill his enemies in battle. If one man kills another by accident and without premeditation, he is not guilty of murder, for we read in Holy Scripture: "He that killeth his neighbor ignorantly, and who is proved to have had no hatred against him, but to have gone with him to the wood to hew wood, and in cutting down the tree the axe slipped out of his hand . . . and killed him, he shall . . . live" (Deut., xix, 4, 5). Yet even where the killing is unpremeditated there are two ways in which it may involve sin. If any one engaged in wrong-doing kills a man, he sins. For instance, if two men agree to steal corn, and one lets a sack of corn fall on the other, and so breaks his neck, he is to blame for his death. Or, if by sheer carelessness, one person kills another, he is greatly to blame. For instance, a reckless driver may run over a child, and cause his death.

No one may deliberately slay another, or counsel a third person to commit a murder. The Jews fancied that they kept the commandment, provided that they refrained from killing with their own hands; but a Christian knows that not only his hands, but also his heart must be free from bloodguiltiness, for our Saviour said: "Whosoever is angry with his brother shall be in danger of the judgment; and whosoever shall say to his brother 'Raca', shall be in danger of the council; and whosoever shall say: 'Thou fool,' shall be in danger of hell fire" (Matth., v, 22). These words show plainly that no one is guiltless who cherishes in his heart any anger against his brother; that he sins grievously if he give expression to his anger, and still more grievously if he ill-treat or abuse another, especially if he has no just cause for his wrath.

May God preserve us all from murder, for no one can be more miserable than a murderer. Moreover, we should carefully avoid

all anger and insults, which are occasions of quarrels and murders. God orders us to live at peace with all men, and our Divine Lord said: "If thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar, and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift" (Matth. v, 23, 24). Let us always be mindful of this lesson, and then no one will be angry with, or abuse, or ill-treat or kill his neighbor. Amen.

28. Suicide

The Fifth Commandment forbids suicide as well as murder. Suicide may be direct or indirect. Indirect suicide is committed by those who bring about their own death through irregularity of life or disregard of the laws of health. For instance, many shorten their lives by eating or drinking to excess, by immorality and indulgence in envy, hatred and anger; others overexert their strength, engage in dangerous and foolhardy undertakings, or neglect to take proper care of their bodies.

Direct suicide is committed when a man deliberately takes his own life, or when he refuses to avoid some impending danger and dies in consequence. King Saul was wounded in a battle with the Philistines, and fearing to fall into their hands, he ordered his armourbearer to draw his sword and kill him. The man refused, so Saul took the sword and fell upon it, thus killing himself. Judas Iscariot repented of having betrayed his Lord and Master, and hanged himself in despair. Would that no others since his time had committed the same unnatural and horrible sin! It is hardly credible that men endowed with reason should be guilty of a crime so utterly opposed to common sense, natural instinct and Christianity.

1. Common sense tells us that suicide displays a culpable lack

of charity towards oneself and one's neighbors, especially the members of one's own family. We are bound to love ourselves, and this love is even made the standard of one love for others—"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." Suicide betrays a want of all charity, and a man who kills himself brings misery on others, as many families know by sad experience.

2. Human nature is opposed to suicide, for we all have the instinct of self-preservation, which prevents even animals from self-destruction.

3. Christianity condemns suicide, which cannot be reconciled with the doctrines regarding divine providence, confidence in God, patience in adversity, charity, and recompense in the next life.

The commonest causes of suicide are:—

1. Ungovernable passion, avarice and ambition. Some have killed themselves because they have failed to grow rich or to obtain certain appointments, others because their love affairs have not prospered.

2. Irreligion often leads to suicide, for a man who believes in, hopes and cares for, nothing, will not hesitate to take his own life for some trivial reason.

3. Melancholy and despondency cause many suicides.

4. Some, like Judas Iscariot, give way to despair and remorse, and put an end to their own lives.

5. Fear of disgrace or punishment has often driven thieves and cheats to suicide.

6. Much harm is done, especially to the young, by books in which self-murder is described as permissible or even praiseworthy.

We should be glad that there are so many safeguards against this terrible crime. The first and best is self-control, which will

prevent our giving way to ambition, avarice and passion. We ought to strengthen our faith in God and our confidence in His readiness to help us. We must struggle and pray against any tendency to melancholy or depression, and seek the company of cheerful people, remembering that suicide, far from putting an end to our sufferings, will render them interminable. If our conscience reproaches us, let us cast ourselves upon God's mercy, for He "desires not the death of a sinner, but that he should be converted and live" (Ezech. xxxiii, 2).

Finally beware of books that encourage suicide, and when you hear of anyone who has committed this sin, resolve to accept the warning, and never to fall into it yourself. Amen.

29. Scandal.

The Fifth Commandment forbids us to kill, not only the body, but also the soul of our neighbor. The soul may be killed if we give scandal, *i. e.*, if by any speech, action or omission, that is really or apparently evil, we give our neighbor occasion to sin. Whoever in public talks about or does things from which we ought to refrain in the presence of others, is giving scandal. Impure conversation carried on in the hearing of children, indecent dress, carelessness on the part of a master to keep good order in his household,—these are all instances of scandal, and real evils, likely to cause others to sin. But we may give scandal without actually doing or saying anything wrong in itself, because it is our duty to abstain from anything that may lead others to do evil. St. Paul says: "If meat scandalize my brother, I will never eat flesh" (1 Cor., viii, 13). We must often refrain from indifferent and indecent actions, lest they should be to others occasions of sin. It does not invariably follow that the person scandalized really sins. He may be shocked at the bad example set him, or by God's assistance he may overcome the danger to which he has been exposed; he may even heroically avoid the snare, but his escape does not diminish the sin of the man who gives him scandal: for the latter has done everything to lead his brother to fall and nothing to help him to stand firm. Many will say that they have no wish to lead others astray, but, if that is true, why do they act as they do? If you set fire to a house, it is futile to say that you did not intend to burn it down. A man who, foreseeing the result, deliberately chooses the cause, must certainly desire the result that he foresees. Nor is it a valid excuse to say that one did not foresee how some action could give scandal; provided that the result might have been

foreseen, there is no excuse for shutting one's eyes to it. If a thoughtless mother allows her child to play with a knife, she has no right to say that she did not expect him to cut himself. If we have genuine charity towards our neighbor, we shall avoid doing or saying anything likely to harm him, and it is not difficult to see what actions and words are dangerous. Should we, through sheer carelessness, fail to perceive the danger, we are guilty of the sin of scandal, which is an offence against charity, as great an offence as to rob him of his good name or his property, or to inflict some bodily injury upon him. In fact, by giving him scandal, we wrong him more grievously than by robbing him of his goods, honor and life. If a man is deprived of his money and reduced to poverty, he may still have strength to work and retrieve his fortune; he may lose the help and sympathy of his fellow men, but not the treasure laid up in Heaven for those who bear poverty with patience.

It is a great offence against charity to slander a man, and expose him to contempt and shame, but still he need not lose his true value in God's sight, nor the crown of glory prepared for those who suffer persecution for justice's sake.

It is a great offence against charity to inflict bodily injuries upon one's neighbor, although he may recover from them; and even if he died, the better and nobler part of him, his soul, continues to live, and, if he was ready to meet death, may be at once admitted to God's presence. But the sin of scandal is a far greater offence than any of these. A man who is led into sin loses everything—peace of mind, God's friendship, and, unless he repents, Heaven itself. He is not robbed of his temporal possessions, but of his innocence. He may not be deprived of his good reputation among men, but in God's sight he becomes a worthless and corrupt creature. He may not suffer in body, but his soul dies when God with-

draws His grace from the sinner. If you take away your neighbor's goods and honor, if you reduce him to abject poverty, if you wound or even kill him, you will not wrong him so grievously or render him so unhappy as you would do if you led him into sin.

My brethren, how terrible will be our responsibility, if on the day of judgment we have to answer for the sins of others, as well as for our own! Woe to those who have given scandal! It were better for them that they had never been born! I know of no better means of avoiding this misery than to strive in every way to set a good example to those to whom we have given scandal, so that they may return to the path of virtue. Nothing is so likely to win them back as our own amendment; since in that case the hand that dealt the injury becomes the means of remedy, and life flows from the source whence death issued. Therefore let us seek to live so as to convert and edify those to whom we may have given scandal, and let us set about the task without delay, in order to save ourselves and those whom we have injured from destruction. Amen.

30. THE SIXTH COMMANDMENT

This Commandment forbids every kind of impurity, in thought, word or deed.

1. Impurity is an offense against reason, for man ought not, like a brute, to be dominated by the impulses of nature, but ought rather to bring these impulses under the control of reason. Now a man, who abandons himself to the lusts of the flesh, casts away the dignity which is his in virtue of his possessing reason. Of such an one Tobias says that he gives himself up to his lust like a horse and a mule, which have not understanding (Tob., vi, 17).

2. Impurity dishonors the name of a Christian, who is bound not to walk in the lusts of the flesh, as is the custom of the world. St. Paul says: "This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication; that every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor, not in the passion of lust, like the Gentiles that know not God" (1 Thess., iv, 3-5).

3. Impurity is a disgrace to the body, and every Christian should recognize not only his bodily powers, but also the end for which they were given him. St. Paul says to the Corinthians: "Know you not that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you? If any man violate the temple of God, him shall God destroy" (1 Cor., iii, 16).

If we consider the horrible results of this vice, we shall realize better its iniquity and see how it affects both the body and the soul.

(a) Whoever abandons himself to lust becomes a most miserable slave to foul desires, which are aroused by mere trifles, so that his imagination is full of impurity. Whilst human companionship is to the innocent a source of pleasure, it is to the impure man an occasion of evil cravings, which never leave him, whether he is alone or with others. Every occupation soon becomes distasteful, and serious thought impossible, and so he seeks only sensual amusements, which aggravate his malady. Even in the house of God, the sight of people and things around him awakens his imagination and draws his mind to evil; the thought of God, that is so consoling to others, is to him repulsive. If ever he seriously surveys his life and examines his conscience, he is filled with self-reproach and horror at the excesses of which he is guilty. He resolves to amend his ways, but no sooner is he tempted than, from mere force of habit, he relapses into his former vice, and, realizing

his own weakness, he finally casts aside all faith in God, and ends by being a man devoid of all religion, wallowing in the mire of iniquity. St. Paul gives a vivid description of the state to which such men are reduced. He says: "They have their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their hearts; who despairing have given themselves up to lasciviousness, unto the working of all uncleanness" (Eph., iv, 18, 19).

(b) Impurity has most disastrous effects upon the bodily health of its victims, and causes many diseases as well as imbecility and general weakness.

The most usual causes of this vice are:

1. Excess in eating and drinking. Rich food and drink, if taken in large quantities by people with a tendency to impurity, often give rise to evil cravings.

2. Idleness. A man who has no occupation, has too much leasure for his imagination, and he centres his mind on things to which he would pay no attention if he were at work.

3. Bad books do much harm, as in them impurity is depicted in glowing and attractive colors, likely to influence a careless reader, and call into activity his sensual passions. The same may be said of many plays.

4. Unrestricted intercourse with persons of the opposite sex affords many opportunities of impurity. Frivolous and giddy people lay themselves out to attract those who are innocent and inexperienced; and gradually rob them of all shame and modesty.

5. Bad company, especially association with persons who are immoral and intemperate, leads many astray. There are people who desire to be thought broad-minded, and so profess to feel contempt for all law and order. They delight in getting hold of the

young and inexperienced, partly in order to increase the circle of their acquaintances, and partly in order to dazzle them by their so-called freedom from prejudice and disregard of conventionalities.

6. Want of vigilance is a common source of impurity. If a man fails to notice and resist the first tendencies to evil, or does not know what is dangerous, he is apt to yield to his perverse inclinations.

We must now consider the best means of avoiding this shameful and disastrous vice.

1. Be moderate in eating and drinking. Whoever on principle controls his appetites, will find it easier to check his sensual inclinations. St. Paul says: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury."

2. Accustom yourselves always to have some work on hand, so as not to give free rein to your imagination. Idleness led David to commit adultery and murder.

3. Be careful never to read books of a doubtful character. The young should be guided in their choice of books by the advice of priests, parents or teachers.

4. Be careful in the choice of your friends and companions, for we imperceptibly adopt the views, language, habits and principles of those with whom we associate; therefore, it behooves us to shun people whose words and actions are sinful.

5. The frequent reception of the Sacraments is of great assistance, since they impart strength and help us to overcome our moral weakness. Moreover in order to receive them worthily, we must examine ourselves, and thus we discover not only our sins, but also their causes, and our dominant passions. True contrition changes our dispositions, and a steadfast resolution to avoid sin

weakens our temptations, whilst the shame of confessing our faults confirms our purpose of amendment, and our confessor has an opportunity of giving us good advice and of suggesting remedies.

6. Finally, whoever is tempted to impurity should do his best to subdue his passions, avoid all occasion of sin, and shun the company of those who may lead him into evil. The resolution to stand firm must influence all his conscious thoughts, and govern his actions, so that he may lead a pure and moral life. Amen.

THE SEVENTH COMMANDMENT

31. Theft

The Seventh Commandment teaches us our duty towards our neighbor with respect to his property, and forbids us to injure it in any way.

1. We may injure our neighbor's property intentionally or by carelessness, so that he suffers some harm to his house, fields, garden, implements or business.

2. We injure him when we unjustly appropriate what is his, either secretly or by open violence. Not only thieves and robbers offend in this way, but also all who cheat and deceive others, by adulterating their goods, by giving short weight or measure, etc. Persons employed by others sin, if they do not take care of their master's property, or use it for some purpose other than that which he intends. Children and servants sin, if they take things that do not belong to them.

3. We injure our neighbor if we retain what is his. Those who receive stolen goods sin, if they do not restore the same to the

proper owner; and we are bound to return things entrusted to our care, to give back anything that we may find, and to pay our debts.

4. We injure our neighbor, if in any way we contribute towards inflicting a loss upon him, or encourage, advise, and pay others to damage his goods.

No matter how a theft is committed, it is always sinful in God's sight, for it is utterly opposed to the principles of justice, which is one of God's perfections. A thief takes what does not belong to him, having neither earned nor deserved it. Theft is abhorrent to men, because it is a violation of the bond of charity, that should unite them. A thief is the enemy of all owners of property, and disturbs their peace and prosperity. He is an outcast from human society, and is incapable of true religious feeling and charity. Why does any one steal? Sometimes through indolence, because he prefers idleness to labor; sometimes through greed, because he wishes to have fine clothes and plenty to eat and drink. If his own earnings do not suffice to buy what he desires, he will steal and cheat, in order to gratify his taste for luxury. Sometimes a man steals through avarice, because he wants to grow rich quickly; but whatever his motive may be, the consequences of theft are always disastrous both to the person who is robbed, and to the thief himself, who incurs heavy punishment and great disgrace, and burdens his soul with mortal sin. If any one is seized with a desire for the property of others, let him remember the words: "Thou shalt not steal." They should deter him even if his poverty urges him to take what does not belong to him, or to keep back, for his own advantage, what is due to another. If he is tempted to injure, waste or destroy the property of others, let him remember that this is equivalent to stealing it.

God has engraved the prohibition to take or injure the goods of others deep in the heart of every living man, and we need no special instruction to convince us that it is wrong to steal. The fact is universally recognized, and no one dares to question it. Both religion and law require us to leave everyone in possession of what lawfully belongs to him. Amen.

32. Deceit and Fraud

We frequently come across other forms of injustice whereby our neighbor is deprived of his property indirectly, and not by open theft. Many persons waste money belonging to others, and then have recourse to all kinds of tricks in order to escape detection. Many a father gambles away the means of educating his children and giving them a good start in life. There are innumerable ways in which men try to defraud and outwit one another; may your consciences be clear and not condemn you whilst I mention the most common kinds of fraud, the devices by which men evade their obligations to the State; the extortionate interest often exacted from debtors, who are driven to despair in consequence; the diminution or non-payment of wages earned; the reckless running up of bills, which reduces many honest tradesmen to poverty; the unjust law-suits that bring misery and ruin upon all concerned with them; the tricks of trade, which people regard as quite legitimate; and the excessive sums asked in payment for work done and entertainment supplied. Each of the things that I have just mentioned involves injury and loss to our neighbor, and it is well for conscientious Christians to be reminded of the Church's teaching on the subject of fraud, in order that they may stoutly resist and overcome the temptation to adopt such practices. The more we

examine the usual course of trade, labor and contracts, the more convinced are we that there is much in them incompatible with strict justice. There are ways of getting profit out of others, which, though quite common, are likely to awaken conscientious scruples, and it is not a sufficient excuse to plead that such things have always been done in trade. If that were the case, there would not be so much mystery about them; for what would be the good of concealing anything from a person already aware of it? Why disguise a fact that he knows? Why be ashamed and make excuses, if ever the trickery is discovered? Does not this prove the existence of genuine deception?

Even in the Old Testament the Jews were commanded to have a just and true weight for "God hateth all injustice" (Deut., xxv, 16). Solomon says: "He that gathereth treasures by a lying tongue is vain and foolish, and shall stumble upon the snares of death" (Prov., xxi, 6); and to the Thessalonians St. Paul writes: "Let no man overreach or circumvent his brother in business," and St. Augustine, commenting on these words, remarks: "Ill-gotten goods may fill the money bag, but they bring ruin upon the soul." The same teaching is applicable to us as to the Jews of old; therefore let every Christian avoid all kinds of fraud and deception, and be always honest in word and deed. Amen.

33. Restitution

It is no more necessary to prove that, when wrong has been done, it is a duty to make restitution, than it was to show the injustice of injuring another man's goods. Common sense tells us that we must not steal, and that we must repair any harm done to another. Every one knows that he ought to do as he would be done by, and of course a man, who has suffered loss, desires restitution to be

made by the person who caused it. It is an obvious duty to restore to their owner all stolen or ill-gotten goods, and our very salvation depends upon our doing so. St. Augustine says that no contrition is genuine unless it is accompanied by restitution. A sinner feels pain at having offended God, and resolves never again to commit the same sin, but he must also purpose to do his best to repair the injury, that he has caused or inflicted; otherwise his contrition is not genuine. A Christian who refuses to make reparation continues to bear the burden of his sins, provided that it is within his power to undo the evil he has wrought. He ought, as soon as he repents, to forsake the sin, and to satisfy all the obligations that it has laid upon him; in other words, he must at once set about the task of making reparation, as otherwise he is not truly penitent. Now repentance is essential to salvation, and therefore no one can be saved, who does not restore stolen or ill-gotten goods. Nothing but sheer inability to make reparation can release him from this duty; and it is obvious that no man can be asked to do impossibilities. Still he is exempt only for as long as the impossibility of restitution continues. Supposing a man squanders money that does not belong to him; he may reduce himself to such poverty that restitution is impossible; yet subsequently, if by his own industry or by some stroke of good luck, he again acquires money, the duty of making restitution revives, and lasts as long as he lives, although the person wronged may have given up all hope of repayment, or may even have agreed to accept the payment of part, and not the whole, of the money due.

It often happens that a man, who ought to restore unjustly acquired goods, tries to persuade himself that it is absolutely impossible for him to do so, because it would involve cutting down his own expenses, diminishing his business, or sacrificing his taste

for luxury and display. Where their own advantage is concerned, people are very clever in deceiving themselves, and many endanger their salvation, because they believe that they cannot make restitution. Salvation is, as we have seen, impossible for one who, being in a position to restore ill-gotten goods, refuses to do so, and yet how seldom does such a man make restitution, especially if he has kept the goods for a long time and come to regard them as his own! His passions put many hindrances in the way of honest action, and without a miracle of grace he is not likely to overcome them. It needs no small degree of virtue to relinquish things that we have appropriated, and the ordinary view taken of restitution proves that this is the case. Although the person making restitution is only giving back to the man wronged his own property, he is apt to think that he is conferring a vast favor, and that it is only reasonable for the other to remit a good deal of the debt. Should the latter refuse to accept less than his due, the debtor considers him to be acting unfairly, and may actually give up or postpone the idea of returning the money. Does not this show plainly that restitution is not often made? It is dangerous to put it off, for death may frustrate our best intentions. All sorts of pretexts and excuses are invented to show why no restitution need be made, or why it should be put off as long as possible.

(a) One man pleads that he has nothing himself, and so cannot pay his debts. Could he not work harder and earn more? Might he not live more frugally and save something? Can he not arrange to pay by installments? Surely it is not impossible for him to make some return.

(b) Another says: "I do not want to publish my disgrace and lose my reputation." But need making restitution involve such

publicity? Consult your confessor, and he will advise you how to act.

(c) A third excuses himself by arguing that he was deceived by others, but surely that does not justify him in being a cheat.

(d) A fourth wants to put off making restitution until he is in a better position. This man shows plainly that he has no wish to make it at all, and the longer he puts off doing his duty, the harder it becomes.

(e) Finally some one suggests making his will in such a way that the debt will be paid after his death. How can he be sure that his instructions will be carried out? Is it not much better to put things in order during one's life-time?

Away with all pretexts and excuses; they are futile and worthless. Beware of shirking a duty imposed both by common sense and by religion, and run no risk of having to pay the penalty hereafter for its evasion. Amen.

THE EIGHTH COMMANDMENT

34. Thou Shalt Not Bear False Witness

This Commandment, by forbidding falsehood, calumny and suspicion, teaches us not to be unjust to our neighbor either in word or thought. I propose to-day to speak to you on the subject of falsehood. Every word or action that is at variance with the truth, and is intended to deceive, may be called a falsehood. The magnitude of the sin depends chiefly upon the circumstances under which it is committed and the consequences that ensue. St. Thomas distinguishes three kinds of lies; the first is uttered with a good in-

tention or to avert some evil; the second with the intention of making merry at another's expense, and the third in order maliciously to conceal or deny the truth, thus causing injury to another's reputation or property. It is obvious that the magnitude of a falsehood that injures one's neighbor, depends upon the amount of injury inflicted; no one questions this fact; but some people cannot see that there is any harm in telling a lie with a good intention, although Christianity forbids such falsehoods, and never allows us to do evil that good may result. As to lies uttered in jest, they are plainly opposed to the spirit of Christianity, which is a spirit of charity, for no one likes to be made a laughing-stock.

The duty of truthfulness is inculcated by nature; man alone was endowed by his Maker with the gift of speech, in order to make known the thoughts of his heart to his fellow-creatures. A liar violates this natural law. Speech is intended to be a means of communication, and every man is at liberty to keep his thoughts to himself, for no one can claim a right to know them. God alone can read our hearts, and to Him only need we give an account for our thoughts. But by the very fact of speaking, we announce to others our intention of communicating our thoughts to them, and this entitles them to demand the truth of us. In this way every falsehood is an offence against both God and our neighbor.

God is truth, and incapable of deception, for He hates and abhors what is opposed to the infinite perfection of truth. A liar misuses the gift of speech, and his tongue does not express the thoughts of his heart. As God's creatures it is our duty to live according to His perfections, and not to interrupt the harmony of the universe. Hence Solomon says that lying lips are an abomination to the Lord (Prov., xii, 22). Lying gives rise to many evils, as Solomon writes:

"Deceitful souls go astray in sins" (Prov., xiii, 13). One falsehood is often enough to stir up enmity and persecution and to break up family affection. Much harm is done in business and everyday life by lying, which is used as a cloak for injustice and oppression by many officials. Of such men Jeremias says: "A man shall mock his brother, and they will not speak the truth, for they have taught their tongue to speak lies, they have labored to commit iniquity" (Jer., ix, 5). From these words St. Basil concludes that just as truth is the goal towards which all virtues tend, in order to attain permanence and perfection, so is falsehood the culmination of all vices, the ultimate point of malice, casting an ugly shadow even on virtues and aggravating all vice. Avarice is in itself a vice, but if a miser tells lies in order to get more money, his vice becomes a still greater offence. If an arrogant man lies for the purpose of self-aggrandizement, or a vindictive man in order to injure his enemy, or a libertine in order to indulge his passions, or a lazy man in order to excuse his shortcomings, in every case the original vice is intensified in God's sight. In a similar way virtues lose their luster if they are not free from falsehood, even though excellent intentions led to its use. If one who is humble tries by means of lies to conceal his good qualities and works, if one who is charitable gets support for the poor by the same means, or if the just say what is false in order to bring the wicked to penitence, then in every case real virtues are tarnished and lose their value; no matter how good the intentions may be, with which a lie is uttered, it is still an evil, and we must never do wrong in hopes that good will result.

Experience shows that, owing to human frailty, we sometimes say what is false, in spite of all our vigilance, but habitual lying is not a frailty but a sin, for which we shall have to answer to Al-

mighty God. Some people pay no attention to falsehoods, or perhaps mention them in confession without any true contrition or purpose of amendment, and thus the bad habit becomes more firmly rooted and is never cured.

Flatterers have falsehood in their hearts and lies on their lips, since, in order to curry favor with others or to gain some advantage, they are ready to say and do anything. They possess the art of minimizing the faults of others whom they desire to please, and so they call avarice prudence, extravagance generosity and so on. May God preserve us from such flattery! Isaias says: "Woe to you that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter" (Is., v, 20).

My brethren; it behooves all men invariably to speak the truth, so let us be faithful to our duty in this respect. According to Holy Scripture a lie is a foul blot in a man (Ecclus., xx, 26), for it deprives him of God's love and favor, plunges him into many other sins, and robs him of the esteem and confidence of his neighbors. For every reason we should be on our guard lest any falsehood should ever escape us, whether it be for the benefit or injury of ourselves or others. Let us speak simply and straightforwardly, as our Lord taught His disciples to speak. Amen.

35. Calumny

Some people are continually talking, in an uncharitable spirit, of their neighbor's faults and behavior, criticizing and condemning him without any right or authority, and often without cause. It is an extremely bad habit to make the shortcomings of others our favorite topic of conversation and to judge them according to our own ideas, meddling even with things that are sacred and worthy of reverence, and whoever ventures to condemn indiscriminately rich and poor, friends and foes, acquaintances and strangers, both living and dead, displays his own tendency to rash-judgment and calumny. St. Thomas says that calumny consists in imputing to a man a sin of which he is innocent, or in magnifying his offences, or in putting a bad interpretation upon all that he does, or in ascribing bad motives for his actions, or in betraying his secrets; but there are other ways in which we may be guilty of calumny, viz., if we fail to stand up for one whose honor is assailed, and keep silence through fear or human respect, or utter faint praise that is tantamount to a condemnation.

Every one is naturally inclined to make the most of his good qualities and to conceal as far as possible what is wrong. Almost involuntarily he tries to show his own superiority and to win esteem. This tendency is the result of self-love, which drags our virtues into prominence and casts a veil over our defects, but does just the reverse in reference to our neighbors, so that the more they are depreciated, the more we shall be exalted. Hence self love prompts each of us to represent the good qualities of others in an unfavorable light, and to undervalue their good actions, by imputing to them bad motives or mean designs, whilst at the same time we draw attention to their vices and faults. It is easy enough

to understand why men judge their neighbors so uncharitably. We are guilty of detraction when we speak evil truthfully but unnecessarily of our neighbor, and of calumny when the injurious statements are false. In both cases we act unjustly. Each individual stands in the same relation to God as a servant to his master. Now a servant is answerable to his master, and no one else, for the manner in which he does his duty, for his loyalty in speech and action, and for his care of his employer's interests. None but the master has a right to find fault with or condemn a servant, because none but the master has authority over him. We are subject to God, and have to answer to Him for our actions and our obedience to His laws, inasmuch as He alone has made the laws and has power to chastise transgressors. Therefore, if any man presumes to judge another, and to think or speak evil of him, giving free rein to his own rash judgments, he is undoubtedly to some extent encroaching upon his Creator's rights.

Calumny has many bad effects; as St. James says the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity, an unquiet evil, full of deadly poison (James, iii, 6, 8). The Apostle is referring to the tongue of a slanderer, which defiles everything that it touches, and assails alike the good and the bad, the virtuous and the vicious, clergy and laity. It leaves ruin everywhere, and does not spare the dead, for, like actual fire, it besmirches what it cannot destroy.

The tongue is a world of iniquity; it reveals the mote in a fellow-creature's eye, and conceals the beam in that of the slanderer, who in his meanness and envy looks askance at others and secretly hates them, praising them to their face and finding fault with them behind their back.

A slanderer acts with cold-blooded cruelty, striking at the absent, who cannot defend themselves, and giving scandal to his hearers.

The tongue is an unquiet evil, spreading destruction broadcast, breaking the bonds of friendship, stirring up strife and discord between acquaintances and neighbors, arousing feelings of hatred and revenge, and putting an end to peace and good-will. The tongue is full of deadly poison, infecting everything with its deadly breath and tarnishing the brightest virtues. Its praise is detraction, its applause is hypocritical, its silence is malicious, and it never ceases to spread its venom. Nowhere does calumny do more harm than if private family affairs are made the subject of uncharitable discussion. Every man looks upon his home as a sanctuary, and what goes on there is not to be divulged to people in general. Therefore, he feels himself wronged if a friend, who has been a guest in the house, talks about what takes place within its walls. We all practise a sort of reserve away from home, and are on our guard against publishing all our private affairs, and so we resent it when an outsider makes them known. Gossip about other people's family matters does a great deal of harm, and to calumniate those in authority is a grievous offence. St. Augustine tells us that slanders against men in high position are more reprehensible than those against ordinary people, but worst of all are those directed against our rulers in Church and State. Like ourselves they are liable to faults and frailties, but it is very wrong to discuss these things, and to condemn their behavior towards their inferiors.

If you remonstrate with a slanderer, he will generally try to justify himself by saying that he is only speaking the truth. Even if this is the case, and all his assertions can be proved, even if he never oversteps the line between detraction and calumny and never exaggerates, is he quite blameless? He is robbing another of honor and reputation; is this justifiable? Who gave him any right to act

as judge? Our Saviour says: "Judge not, that you may not be judged; for with what judgment you judge, you shall be judged, and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again" (Matt., vii, 1, 2). Would the slanderer like us to speak of him as he speaks of others? And if he does not wish his own faults discussed, why does he discuss his neighbor's? He says perhaps that it is well for a criminal's vices to be made known, that others may rebuke him. Men are offended, not converted, by rebukes, and one who feels injured is not likely to amend his ways. It is better for each of us to look at home, and examine our own words, to see if there is anything in them calculated to hurt our neighbors. Unless we do this, we shall not be good Christians. "If any man think himself to be religious, not bridling his tongue, but deceiving his own heart, this man's religion is vain" (James, i, 26). Another slanderer will maintain that he says nothing but what is universally known. Even if that is true, why make your brother's faults still more public? It is surely a waste of time to tell people what they know, and, after all, they may not be aware of the facts as you represent them. Moreover, the uncharitable gossip might die down, if you did not renew it, and thus revive the scandal that was on the point of being forgotten.

Charity would impel us to cover up the scandal, and not to bring it back to life.

A third may argue that he discusses his neighbors simply for the sake of conversation, and not with any intention of doing them harm. He says that he cannot always talk about religion or the weather, and that he must have something to say, so he makes fun of others, and thinks that there is nothing wrong in so doing. It seems rather cruel to derive amusement at another's expense, especially as he would be very angry if he heard what is said about him.

Supposing he came in, just as you are making fun of him; would you not feel embarrassed? Would you like others to speak thus of you in your absence? Would you regard it as a valid excuse that they only wanted to make conversation, and did not intend to hurt you? Be careful to do to others as you would have them do to you. The best plan is not to gossip about your neighbors, and not to criticize their proceedings. It is much easier to rob another of his good reputation than to restore it. Calumny is an offence against God and our fellowmen, and whoever calumniates another incurs grave responsibility and severe punishment. Therefore restrain your tongue, and you will avoid much evil. Amen.

36. Suspicion

When a man for no sufficient reason thinks others capable of wrong-doing, we say that he is suspicious. Now, who ever condemns his neighbor uncharitably, sins against God, who is the Judge of all men, and does not allow us to judge one another. Some day we shall have to stand before Him and receive our sentence, but we must not try to forestall His decision. St. Paul exclaims: "Who art thou, O man, who judgest another's servant? To his own master he standeth or falleth." It is therefore a sin against God to judge our fellow creatures at all, and especially to judge them uncharitably. God is always just, and judges us according to our actions, rewarding the good and punishing the bad. He cannot regard with indifference one who treats his neighbors unjustly and uncharitably, and condemns their actions, although he cannot perceive their thoughts and intentions. It is impossible for us always to understand the motives of others. For instance, if any one is fond of going to church, some uncharitable people may declare him to be a humbug; but how can they know this? It is

not wrong to go to church and pray, and very likely he is pleasing God. Why should people take it for granted that his intention is bad and not good? Can they read his thoughts and disposition? God alone has power to read the hearts of men, and whoever arrogates to himself such a power, sins against God. Moreover, we are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves. No one can uncharitably condemn the actions of others and at the same time display Christian charity; therefore, his want of charity is another sin. We cannot love others if we put a bad interpretation on all that they do and say. Would you like to be treated thus? Would you like spiteful people to impute bad motives to you, insinuating that you were always seeking your own advantage, and only pretending to be good? Be sure that such behavior on your part is offensive not only to men, but also to God, who desire us to love one another. Our Saviour said: "Judge not, that ye be not judged"; our duty therefore is plain, and any violation of it is a sin. Those who are in the habit of uncharitably criticizing others, invariably neglect their own duties towards God, for a man who is always busy about what does not concern him cannot attend to his own affairs, and whilst he fixes his eyes on his neighbor's faults he overlooks his own.

Beware, then, of uncharitably condemning others, since, as we have seen, you thereby offend both God and men, and also injure yourselves, for you give people occasion to think ill of you. Men do not trust one who is too keen about finding fault with others, because they fear lest he should treat them in the same way and speak evil of them in secret, though he may flatter them openly. We all avoid association with those whom we fear, and refrain from helping them, even if they need it, because we assume that it is impossible to please them, and that they would grumble instead

of thanking us. A suspicious man often ends by being shunned and despised, or he is greatly embarrassed should he be called upon to substantiate publicly the charges that he has brought against others. As he can seldom succeed in doing so, he is occasionally condemned and fined for libel or defamation of character. Such a person exposes himself to the criticism of those around him, who are apt to condemn him with a similar lack of charity, for they begin to wonder whether one who finds so much fault is himself free from blame, and thus they frequently discover in him defects greater than those which he imputes to others. Our Divine Lord warns us that with the same measure that we mete, it shall be meted out to us again, and so one who is harsh to his neighbors will be treated with severity by God, and one who shows no mercy will meet with none at the day of judgment. The Jews experienced God's chastisement for their want of charity; they always criticized our Lord, and found fault with all that He said and did; they abused Him as a malefactor, and never rested until they had secured His condemnation to death. Yet He rose again in glory, and the Jews were punished when the Romans came and destroyed Jerusalem, slaying most of the inhabitants and scattering the rest, so that even now their descendants are homeless wanderers on the face of the earth. Who can deny that their want of charity injured themselves more than any one else? An uncharitable man, if he looks back on his past life, will find that from the time when he began to condemn his neighbors, he has ceased to be good and prosperous, for he has devoted all his attention to their affairs and none to his own; he has wished to injure them, and has ruined himself.

My brethren, let us beware of all uncharitable condemnation of others, for it does us harm and displeases God. As Christians we

are bound by the law of charity; let us not act like the Jews who put Jesus to death. Instead of judging others let us look at home; every one has his own faults, for which he will have to give account personally; he need not trouble about others. Happy is he whose conscience acquits him of serious faults and who, like our Lord, can exclaim: "Which of you can convince me of sin?" Amen.

THE NINTH COMMANDMENT

37. Thou Shalt Not Covet Thy Neighbor's Wife

This Commandment forbids all impure thoughts and desires, which might lead to evil actions. If we can root out all such exciting causes of sin, we shall have more time and energy to devote to the discharge of our religious duties.

Natural and temperate desires, that do not exceed moderation, are not forbidden, and still less reprehensible are the spiritual cravings of the heart for things opposed to the flesh; in fact Holy Scripture encourages us to foster desires of this kind. The Ninth Commandment forbids all wilful consent to impure thoughts and desires, and all wilful pleasure in the irregular motions of the flesh. One reason why such desires are forbidden is that their gratification leads to grievous sins, for instance to adultery, drunkenness or murder. Sometimes the thing desired is not in itself bad, but for some other cause is prohibited; there are certain things which God and the Church forbid us to possess. This Commandment forbids a man to wish to marry another man's wife, as well as it forbids him to cherish any impure desire for her. Under the old law when divorce was possible, it often happened that a woman, rejected by one man, was married by another. But God forbade divorce, in order that men should not be tempted to forsake their

wives, nor women to behave towards their husbands in such a way as almost to force them to seek a separation. No man can marry a woman during her husband's lifetime, although she may be separated from him; he cannot therefore even desire to marry her without sin, for the very desire involves a wish either for her husband's death or for adultery. The same remark applies also to a woman who is solemnly betrothed; she cannot marry another man without being false to a promise, nor can any woman marry who has dedicated herself to the service of God in the religious life.

A consideration of the bad results of evil desires will make it easier for us to overcome them. One bad result is that, by yielding to them, we allow sin to rule supreme in our souls. St. Paul says: "Let not sin reign in your mortal body, so as to obey the lusts thereof" (Rom., vi, 12). If we resist evil desires, we loosen the hold of sin upon our hearts, but if we yield to them, we deprive God of His Kingdom within us, and enthrone sin in His place. Another bad result is that foul desires lead to all kinds of sin. St. John says: "All that is in the world is the concupiscence of the flesh and the concupiscence of the eyes and the pride of life" (1 John, ii, 16). Moreover, these desires obscure all sound judgment, and men who do not resist them regard everything as permissible for which they feel a craving. Concupiscence stifles the good seed that has been sown in our hearts. St. Mark records that our Lord said in the parable of the sower: "And others there are who are sown among thorns, these are they that hear the Word, and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches and the lusts after other things, entering in, choke the Word, and it is made fruitless" (Mark, iv, 18, 19). If we are to succeed in resisting foul desires, we must have self-control, for without it we cannot lead good and virtuous lives. The struggle may cost us dear, but the

victory will be glorious. St. Paul describes a race and says: "Know you not that they that run in the race, all run indeed, but one receiveth the prize. Every one that striveth for the mastery refraineth himself from all things" (1 Cor., ix, 24). In the same way all Christians hope to win their heavenly crown, but only those who persevere to the end are successful. Our salvation cannot be secured without much labor and sacrifice, and many grow discouraged, and are inclined to give up the quest. To such I would say: Continue to suppress your evil inclinations; fight on; pray without ceasing, imploring God to give you grace and strength; and rely on His help; then, to use St. Paul's words, you will walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lusts of the flesh (Gal., v, 16), and your reward will be great in heaven. Amen.

THE TENTH COMMANDMENT

38. Covetousness

The Tenth Commandment forbids all envious and covetous thoughts and unjust desires of our neighbor's goods. "The desire of money is the root of all evils: which some coveting have erred from the faith and have entangled themselves in many sorrows" (1 Tim., vi, 10). Judas Iscariot wanted to get money, justly or unjustly, and his covetousness made him betray his Master and then commit suicide. It is quite right for us to try to acquire property, if our motives and the means employed are good, but sometimes a desire for wealth becomes excessive, and men aim at riches and do not scruple to have recourse to base means of getting them. Such persons act as if their whole happiness depended upon the amount of their worldly possessions, and as if God had created them solely to make money. They begrudge others what they enjoy,

and are angry if it seems impossible to appropriate their goods. Some refuse to do anything at all unless they are paid, and are always dissatisfied with what they receive.

At the present day almost everyone is in a hurry to get rich, and people care little whether they employ just or unjust means of becoming so. They work early and late, and often overexert their strength, injure their health and shorten their life. In order to satisfy their greed for money, they yield to temptations of many kinds, ask extortionate interest, defraud their neighbors, and undertake costly lawsuits. In their excitement they forget their duties to God, themselves and their fellowmen, and become irreligious, careless and hard-hearted.

I wish that all Christians realized the full evil of covetousness, and perceived it to be the source of much wickedness; would that they appreciated temporal possessions at their true value, and saw how impossible it is for wealth to afford permanent happiness! They can take nothing with them into the next world, and, if they thought more of eternity, if they trusted God more implicitly, knowing that it is not His will for all men to be equally rich, they would learn to be less grasping and more contented with what they have, and consequently they would be far happier. Let every Christian strive to control his desire for money and to cherish good will towards his neighbors, and then he will avoid making them and himself unhappy. Amen.

THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE CHURCH

39. The Commandments in General

Besides the Commandments of God, we have to keep those of the Church. Her divine Founder, when He gave her the power of the Keys, conferred upon her authority to rule and govern the Faithful in His name, and she began at once to use this power most wisely, so as to enlarge the Kingdom of Christ. Thus we read in the Acts of the Apostles how St. Paul and his disciple Timothy traveled from city to city, exhorting the inhabitants to observe the rules laid down by the Apostles. The Commandments of the Church originated in the apostolic tradition, and developed almost spontaneously from the life of the Church; they were permanently formulated by General Councils and the Apostolic See at a much later date when the zeal of the Faithful was growing cold. They aim at the promotion of Church discipline, at regulating the life of Christians, and at maintaining public worship. The chief Commandments of the Church are six:

1. To hear Mass on Sundays and holy days of obligation.
2. To fast and abstain on the days appointed.
3. To confess at least once a year.
4. To receive the Holy Eucharist during the Easter season.
5. To contribute to the support of our pastors.
6. Not to marry persons who are not Catholics, or who are related to us within the third degree of kindred, nor privately without witnesses, nor to solemnize marriage at forbidden times.

In substance the Commandments of the Church only expound and define those of God, especially with reference to the time when we must obey them. Thus the first Commandment of the Church

is only an expansion of the one requiring us to rest on the Sabbath day; it also impresses upon us the duty of observing the holy days appointed by the Church, and of hearing Holy Mass, this being the supreme act of worship and the most suitable manner of keeping a holy day. The second Commandment of the Church determines the rules for fasting, a practice sanctified by Christ's example, and enjoined by Holy Scripture; whilst the third and fourth Commandments order us to receive the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Communion at a certain time. The fifth Commandment provides for the maintenance of churches and clergy, and the sixth regulates the important matter of marriage. We are bound to obey the Commandments of the Church, for our Lord said that whosoever would not hear the Church, was to be regarded as a heathen and publican (Matt., xviii, 17). In writing to the Hebrews St. Paul says: "Obey your prelates and be subject to them, for they watch as being to render an account of your souls, that they may do this with joy and not with grief" (Hebr., xiii, 17). It is to our own advantage to pay loyal obedience to the Commandments of the Church, since by keeping Sundays and holy days in the way prescribed, we sanctify them, and by fasting and frequently receiving the Sacraments we purify and strengthen our souls.

It is most unreasonable and unchristian for people to profess to be Catholics, and at the same time to refuse obedience to their Church. Beware, my brethren, of ever recklessly transgressing any of her Commandments, and endeavor to be zealous in complying with the orders of the Church. Like David, make it your boast that you value God's Commandments more than gold and precious stones.

40. The Commandments of the Church in Particular

The first Commandment requires us to hear Mass on all Sundays and holy days, and to hear it with due attention and devotion, because the holy Sacrifice is the supreme act of worship, and by assisting at it we honor God in the best and most suitable way. The early Christians used to assemble every Sunday in order to hear the prophetical books, the Gospels and the Epistles read aloud; they listened to an exposition of the passages read, and to an instruction on morals; then they prayed and sang together, received the Lord's Supper, which was celebrated at these assemblies, and made a collection for the poor. No one absented himself who could possibly attend these meetings.

Make it a rule to attend your parish church both morning and evening on every Sunday and holy day. Do not be satisfied with just hearing Mass, but do your best to hear a sermon or instruction, and remember that you are not free to seek amusements until you have fulfilled your religious obligations. The second Commandment of the Church requires us to limit our quantity of food to a certain extent on definite days and at certain periods of the year. When we fast, we take but one full meal in the day. When we abstain, we eat no flesh meat. The Church decides when we are to fast and abstain. The Israelites fasted on the days of atonement and at times of public calamity; Moses, Elias and other prophets were in the habit of fasting for long periods. The people of Ninive fasted and did penance for their sins. St. John the Baptist fasted very strictly in the desert, and our Lord prepared for His public ministry by a fast of 40 days. He recommended fasting as a salutary practice, pleasing to God, but He condemned it when undertaken merely from ostentation. Whenever the Apostles had to perform

some difficult task, they fasted; and, as time went on, definite rules were laid down and all adult Christians were required to fast at certain seasons of the year. Fasting purifies the soul, for lust and all evil desires originate in our sensual appetites, and overfeeding the body is an occasion of sin. The flesh is always at war with the spirit, and our corrupt nature needs to be forcibly held in check. Fasting has a twofold effect, inasmuch as it delivers the soul from the assaults of passion and renders it more susceptible to good influences. It is a mistake, however, to think that fasting serves only to subdue the flesh; it is also a means of making satisfaction for sin. Just as Eve's want of self-control was the cause of her sin, so is true fasting not only a safeguard against sin but a form of reparation for it.

The third and fourth Commandments refer to sacramental Confession and Communion, both of which were ordered by Christ Himself. In the early ages of Christianity no rules on this subject were needed, as Christians still displayed their first fervor, and in many places they were accustomed to communicate daily, although it was more usual to receive the Sacraments every Sunday. Later, when this fervor had died away, the Church required her members to communicate at Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. In the year 1215 the Council of the Lateran decided that a Christian should be excommunicated who did not receive the Sacraments at least once in the year, viz., at Easter. In this way the third and fourth Commandments of the Church were formulated, and they are still in force and binding upon all who have reached the age of discretion. The confession should be made to one's own parish priest, or he may sanction its being made to another. It is, of course, very expedient for us to receive the Sacraments several times each year; in the apostolic age, people availed themselves of every opportunity

to do so, and in times of persecution they communicated daily. The importance of the Fifth and Sixth Commandment is obvious. The Faithful are bound to provide the material means needed by the Church and her servants to carry out the work entrusted to the Church. The regulations concerning marriage are very wise and necessary.

SIN

41. Sin in General

Sin is *a deliberate transgression of the divine law* and order, an act of disobedience and contempt towards God. The root of all evil is to be found in pride and self-will, for when a man sins he resists God and ceases to honor Him above all things. Instead of conforming to God's most wise and holy Will, he withstands it, and thus the creature displays indifference, contempt and even a spirit of rebellion against his Creator. In consequence of their disobedience, Adam and Eve were driven out of Paradise; they transgressed God's Commandment and desired to put themselves on a level with Him. A sinner is guilty of *supreme ingratitude.* God in His infinite love created man for happiness, and made him the highest of all created beings, giving him wonderful powers of mind and body, and authority to rule all the rest of creation. He dealt with man as kindly as a loving father deals with his children. What return does a sinner make for all these favors? None but the blackest and most horrible ingratitude. A sinner is guilty of *misusing God's gifts,* since he employs them for a purpose other than that which pleases God, thus disfiguring or spoiling His works. In short, sin is *an insult offered to God,* and the sinner despises God, misuses His gifts, interrupts the order designed by Him in

His infinite wisdom, and tries to frustrate His intentions. A sinner may do all these things by thoughts, words or works. Because sin is essentially unjust, it entails a load of guilt; it would be well for us if we always remembered this fact, and realized that every grievous sin increases our debt to God, our fellowmen and nature itself.

According to the dispositions of the sinners, sins are classified as deliberate sins, sins of weakness, sins of ignorance and sins of malice.

Inward sins are committed by thought or desire; outward sins by word or action. It is sinful even to let one's thoughts dwell with pleasure upon what is forbidden, or to wish to do anything wrong, as we learn from the ninth and tenth Commandments. If we frequently indulge in bad thoughts, they acquire a great hold upon our minds, and are called up very readily, being almost continually present to our imagination. They give rise to a wish to do or enjoy what God forbids, and then it becomes easy to find an occasion of sin, and the sinful action follows.

Sins are divided, further, into mortal and venial, according to the law that they violate. God wants us to obey all His Commandments, but He does not punish the transgression of all in the same way, since there are some which we cannot break without entirely forfeiting His love and friendship, whereas this terrible penalty is not inflicted upon those who break other Commandments. Mortal sins deprive us of all right to enter heaven, and make us cease to be God's children; they are called mortal because they rob us of sanctifying grace, which is described in Holy Scripture as the life of the soul, and thus they cause us mortal injury. Venial sins do not cut us off from God's friendship, although they bring punishment upon us. Thus distinction between mortal and venial sin is

based on the teaching of Holy Scripture, and Christ speaks of some sins as motes, and of others as beams. In his first Epistle (v, 16, 17), St. John says that some sins are unto death and others not unto death, *i. e.*, some are mortal and others venial.

There are other classifications of sins. Some sins are in a peculiar degree the causes of other sins, and these are called capital or deadly sins. We generally speak of seven deadly sins, viz., pride, avarice, impurity, intemperance, envy, anger and idleness.

Some sins are termed "sins against the Holy Ghost." There are six sins of these, viz., presumption and over-reliance on God's mercy, despair of divine grace, opposition to known truth, envy of the spiritual favors enjoyed by another, obduracy of heart, and final impenitence.

Finally we may be answerable for the sins of others, and take part in them, by counsel, command, consent, encouragement, praise, neglect, failure to rebuke or readiness to excuse.

Sin has certain inevitable and disastrous results. (1) It cuts us off from God. This fact is taught in the parable of the Prodigal Son, who forsook his home and went to a foreign country, where his sins plunged him into misery. This story gives us a true account of sin. God is our life and our home, and sin severs our connection with Him, and His place is taken by self-seeking ambition. The sinful soul shuns God as darkness shuns the light, and He withdraws His presence, since He cannot feel the same delight in a faithless as in a faithful servant. Even God's mercy has its limits. (2) Sin brought death into the world, and the first sin committed was a mortal sin, causing spiritual death, *i. e.*, the loss of justice, which inevitably led to natural death. Mortal sin undermines our life, diminishes our strength and leaves us a prey to weakness and vice (Gen., ii, 17).

You see, my brethren, what a terrible thing sin is; how many kinds of sin there are, the causes that lead to them and the results that follow upon them. If you consider all these things, you cannot fail to conceive a great horror of all sin, and a fervent desire to avoid its evils. Be on your guard against even little sins, and then you will be able to escape the temporal and eternal misery due to wrong doing. Amen.

THE CAPITAL SINS

42. Pride

The seven capital or mortal sins are pride, covetousness, lust, gluttony, anger, envy and sloth. They are called capital sins, because they are the sources from which other sins take their rise, and they are also called mortal sins, because the soul, as long as it remains in a state of sin, is deprived of God's love and favor, of peace and of all right to heaven, and deserves eternal condemnation. It loses all the store of merit that it had previously acquired, and is dead in the sight of God.

Let us to-day consider pride, a very common vice, which manifests itself in various ways. A man who is proud thinks a great deal of himself and very little of others. Exaggerated self-esteem is a characteristic of pride. The Pharisee in the Temple displayed this kind of pride, when he thanked God for not being a publican. A proud man tolerates no injustice to himself, but asserts his own importance and refuses to yield to others. He wishes to take precedence wherever he goes, and is angry if others are treated with more deference. He is ambitious, and ambition is a mark of pride. He talks of nothing but himself and his own good qualities and noble actions; boastfulness is another mark of pride. He bases

his claim to respect upon things of no value, such as his descent from a long line of ancestors, his fine surroundings or his aristocratic acquaintances—in a word, he is vain, and vanity proceeds from pride. He undertakes tasks that are beyond his power to perform, and refuses to believe anything that he cannot understand, even although God has revealed it. Presumption and unbelief often are consequences of pride. He wants to be considered virtuous, though he takes no pains to be so, and sometimes he assumes a cloak of humility in order thus to secure esteem and promotion. Hypocrisy is a proof of pride: A proud man is disobedient and rebels against his lawful superiors, because he wishes to be above and not beneath others. A rebellious spirit is the outcome of pride. He is quick to take offense at every trifle and cannot bear others to enjoy any advantage over him, whilst he is always ready to criticize his neighbors. This tendency to envy and strife is evidence of pride.

You see, then, that pride reveals itself in many different ways, and by this sin a man outrages God and wrongs his neighbors and himself.

1. Pride is an offense against God, because a proud man appropriates the honor due to God, and acts and thinks in a way opposed to the will of God. God, however, resists the proud and chastises them, as we learn from many events recorded in Holy Scripture, *e. g.*, the fall of the angels, the expulsion of Adam and Eve from paradise, the confusion of those who began to build the tower of Babel, etc.

2. The proud sin against their fellowmen, for they generally despise, envy, slander and quarrel with others.

3. They sin against themselves, since their pride prevents them from perceiving their own faults, so that amendment is out of the

question; nor will they endure to be reproved. St. Bernard says: "Pride is an insidious evil, a secret poison, a hidden vice, blinding the heart and concealing itself under a veil of good works." A proud man gains no merit, is hailed by all, acts in a way contrary to his own advantage and falls into many sins. How may these evils be avoided and corrected?

1. We should reflect on what we really are, in body and soul, and then we shall soon discover that we are miserable creatures, with no reason at all for pride.

2. If we consider the extreme malice of pride, we shall be anxious to avoid it.

3. We should beware of attaching too much importance to human praise. All the fine things that people may say about us are not necessarily true.

4. If we compare ourselves with good people, we shall soon see how far inferior we are to them.

Thoughts such as these will make us humble, and unless we possess true humility we cannot please God or earn the good-will of our neighbors, or secure our own salvation.

43. Covetousness

Covetousness is an overweening desire to get and keep other people's property, and not to part with anything, however trifling, unless it is absolutely necessary. The goods may be acquired by fair or by foul, unjust and contemptible means, but if their acquisition is the object of sinful desires, covetousness is present. A covetous man wishes for money, simply for its own sake, not because he needs it. He tries in every way to get it, and has recourse frequently to injustice, cunning, fraud, perjury, violence and cruelty. He has a sinful affection for his property, since he loves it above God and himself, thus making it an idol, for which reason covetousness is rightly called idolatry. Our Divine Saviour tells us that no one can serve God and Mammon, and the covetous man prefers Mammon. God wishes us to use temporal goods in order to acquire those that are eternal, but the covetous would rather bury their money than make a proper use of it. They trust far more to their own shrewdness and wealth than to God's Providence, goodness and help; they think, if they do not actually say: "A man lives on what he has, not on his reliance upon God, who does not work miracles on his behalf." If ever they lose their money, they are in despair, and know not which way to turn. Their folly is quite incomprehensible; they regard money as the sole means of happiness, and are zealous in making it. They dread poverty more than anything else, and whenever they add to their hoard, they flatter themselves that they have put another barrier between themselves and want; yet, however rich they become, they never lose sight of the possibility of being reduced to poverty, and so they can never make up their minds to spend anything on their own gratification, and in this way their fear of want prevents them from enjoying the

wealth accumulated with such industry, and they are finally only the caretakers of their riches. The longer they live, the more do they cling to their possessions, and even when lying on their death-bed, they scheme how to increase them, and die at last after toiling to acquire what they have never enjoyed.

A covetous man generally tries to gloss over his hideous vice, and says: "I have a large establishment, and must look after my property," or: "I do not intend to throw money away," or: "It behooves us to be economical," and so on. Say what he will, however, he cannot hide his covetousness.

The best way of avoiding this horrible vice is often to consider how much a covetous man sins against God, himself and his fellowmen. Remember that worldly possessions are valuable only as means of securing treasures in heaven; we can carry nothing with us to the next world except such merit as we earn by our good works. God can take away our earthly goods and restore them to us, as He sees fit. Let us use what we have in doing works of charity, and then covetousness will never take root in our hearts and bring us to destruction. Amen.

44. Lust

Although I spoke to you on the subject of lust, when dealing with the Commandments, it may not be superfluous to refer to it again, since it is one of the seven deadly sins, that we are now discussing. No commandment is so frequently broken as the sixth, in fact, some people have ceased to regard lust as a sin, and this fact renders it doubly necessary for me to convince you that it is undoubtedly a sin, and indeed a very grievous one, I need only remind you how God said on Sinai: "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and how the Israelites were ordered to put adulterers to death. Our divine Lord

and His Apostles emphatically condemned impurity and adultery. He said: "From the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts" (Matt., xv, 19). St. Paul writes: "This is the will of God, your sanctification; that you should abstain from fornication; That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor: Not in the passion of lust, like the gentiles that know not God" (1. Thess., iv, 3-5). "But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not so much as be named among you, as becometh saints: Or obscenity, or foolish talking, or scurrility, ... For know you this and understand, that no fornicator, or unclean, or covetous person hath inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no man deceive you with vain words" (Ephes., v, 3-6). St. Peter too in his second Epistle warns his converts against uncleanness, and reminds them of the punishment inflicted upon the people of Sodom and Gomorrah for their vices. St. John speaks of concupiscence of the flesh as one of the three great sources of evil in the world. The Catholic Church has always taught that fornication was a mortal sin, and when it was committed by unmarried people, a public penance of 5 years was imposed; in the case of married persons, the penance lasted 15 years.

We have seen how unchastity is condemned by Christ and the apostles, and it seems incredible that nevertheless some persons maintain it to be quite a trifling fault, and not a sin at all. They do this because they have often sinned in this respect, and wish to quiet the voice of conscience, to justify themselves in the sight of others, and to escape being numbered amongst notorious offenders, in order to be able to continue their vicious life. Whoever maintains that fornications and adultery are not sins, contradicts Christ, the Eternal Truth, and His apostles, and has, therefore, ceased to be a Christian.

He is in great danger of eternal damnation, since, so long as he adheres to this pernicious belief, he will not be converted. Let us now consider what is forbidden by God in the Sixth Commandment in addition to adultery. It forbids every kind of impurity, and all that might easily give rise to it, such as impure thoughts and desires, immodest conversations and songs, coarse jests and wanton glances. As soon as the years of childhood are over, we are liable, often through no fault of our own, to many kinds of impure thoughts. If a person cannot prevent these thoughts, but detests them, and does his best to banish them from his mind, they are not sinful; in fact they may be a cause of merit to him, if he resists them. But if he delights in them, they are sinful, because his will consents to them. Evil thoughts give rise to evil desires, to a wish really to commit the sinful act; and this wish is in God's sight as great a sin as the act itself. Let us therefore keep a watch over our thoughts, and resist evil with all our might. Impure thoughts generally lead to impure conversations, and the very fact of speaking or singing about impure things, betrays delight in them. Such words and songs awaken evil thoughts and desires in those who hear them; their sense of shame is destroyed, and they are incited to sinful actions. This is especially the case with young people. St. Paul says, that "evil communications corrupt good manners" (1. Cor., xv, 33), and gradually men grow accustomed to wicked words and songs, and regard as an innocent jest what God has strictly condemned under pain of everlasting punishment. Beware, my Brethren, of impure conversations; never consent to them yourselves, and never tolerate them in others. Avoid the company of those who indulge in them, and refrain from laughing at or applauding them; lose no opportunity of showing your disapproval and disgust at obscenity. Coarse jests and licentious glances should be carefully shunned,

since they give rise to impure thoughts and desires, which in their turn lead to sinful actions. What begins with fun, is often carried much too far. St. Paul warns the Ephesians against foolish talking or scurrility as unseemingly, and offensive to God.

Impurity is a frequent result of drunkenness, which makes a man incapable of reflection or self-control, so that he commits the most horrible sins when he is intoxicated. This is another vice against which St. Paul cautions his converts. Idleness is another cause of impurity, as indeed it is of all vices. When anyone has nothing to do, all sorts of evil thoughts arise in his mind, just as pestilential vapors and unpleasant insects rise from stagnant water. Whilst he is usefully employed, he thinks of his work, and bad thoughts do not as a rule torment those who are wearied with honest labor.

You see, my Brethren, that impurity is a grievous sin; be on your guard against it, and you will avoid many evils of mind and body. Amen.

45. Envy

Envy shows itself in annoyance at another's prosperity and joy at his misfortune, and every one is envious who hates his neighbor for being happier than himself, whether it be that the other has more of this world's goods, or enjoys higher reputation, or is endowed with greater talents and powers, and nothing gives an envious man more satisfaction than to see disaster, shame and loss fall upon his hated rival. Envy is a hideous vice both in its origin and its outward manifestation; it proceeds either from base covetousness or from exaggerated pride. A man would not begrudge others their happiness, unless covetousness made him desire to possess what they enjoy, or pride led him to undervalue their merits and

overestimate his own. It is a clear case of an evil tree bearing evil fruit. It is impossible to overlook the hideous character of envy. We come across people who confess that they give way to feelings of pride, hatred, anger, vindictiveness, etc., but very seldom do we find anyone willing to acknowledge that he is envious. He is so thoroughly convinced that this vice is shameful, that he tries to conceal its very existence even from himself. He may well feel ashamed of envy, for it is inexcusable as well as hideous, and checks all the kindly impulses of nature, which prompts us to sympathize with those around us, sharing their joys and sorrows. Envy destroys all sympathy, and to an envious man his neighbor's happiness is a source of annoyance, not of satisfaction, whilst he gloats over the misfortunes, sorrows and sufferings of others. It is disgraceful for any man thus to be false to his own nature, and to cast aside his humanity. Besides being shameful, envy is also exceedingly foolish, for is it not the height of folly to be vexed and grieved at what does not in the least concern us, and cannot be altered? Is it not folly to rejoice over what does us no good, and to gloat over things from which we can derive no advantage? An envious man shows himself a fool in begrudging others their prosperity and in delighting at their misfortune. Philosophers of old were right in describing envy in most contemptuous and bitter terms, for this vice is a disgrace to humanity. Far more shameful is it for one who professes Christianity, which inculcates charity, bids us promote the welfare of others, and protect them from disaster; it commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves, and tells us that charity thinketh no evil and envieth not. Every Christian professes to be the follower of One who went about doing good, spreading happiness and saving men from misery. Envy is then a hideous vice, dishonorable to the dignity of mankind, and bringing shame upon our Christian

profession, and it is amazing that so many people yield to it. Every one is envious who resents another's success, dislikes hearing another praised, and takes offence at every privilege that another enjoys. Every one is envious who is annoyed with his neighbors for being happy and contented, and who is pleased when they feel pain and sorrow. If only we fully realized the foul and shameful character of this degrading vice, we should perceive the necessity of making a firm resolution never to give way to it. If it could be once and for all banished from human society, all its disastrous consequences would disappear, whereas now we see them plainly in the case both of the envious man himself and of those whom he envies. Envy is a canker, poisoning both the body and soul of its victims, and the envious seldom look well or happy. They are tormented and impelled to wreak vengeance on every one who seems more prosperous than themselves; they do not shrink from slander and detraction, they undermine their neighbor's domestic happiness by sowing seeds of discord in his family, and thus they tear asunder the most sacred bonds, and even venture to lay violent hands on his life and property. A man possessed by a spirit of envy hates others and desires their downfall, and hence he yields without scruple to calumny, greed and murder.

When the rulers of a nation allow themselves to be influenced by envy, incalculable harm results, for justice is trodden under foot, the innocent are oppressed, truth is disregarded, and upright citizens are viewed with suspicion, as soon as their superiors begin to envy them, and seek to remove them from prominent positions. In this way monarchs and states are injured, and, where the great and powerful envy one another, war with all its attendant horrors and miseries follows. This is not exaggerated language, but literal truth, my Brethren. Envy drove Cain to kill his brother and render

himself an outcast. Envy overthrew the domestic happiness of Urias, and the same vice reduced David to the level of an adulterer and murderer. Jacob was afflicted in his old age by the quarrels among his sons, who envied Joseph his father's affection. Envy led Core, Dathan and Abiron to stir up rebellion in Israel. Envy on the part of the high priests and Pharisees caused them to compass the death of Jesus Christ. Satan's envy of man's happiness impelled him to bring sin and misery upon the whole human race. If we calmly survey the present state of the world, we shall have no difficulty in detecting the havoc wrought by envy. We must all know individuals and households, once prosperous and contended, who can ascribe their actual calamities to this cause. Many unjust verdicts and much fraud and deception are due to envy; the innocent are oppressed and the honest are ruined because this shameful vice influences so many in both public and private life.

Let us be on our guard against this horrible sin, and do our best, as human beings and as Christians, to resist all temptation to envy our neighbors for their prosperity or to rejoice over their misery; let us rather sympathize with them in their joys and sorrows. Envy is so mean and dishonorable that common sense, religion, humanity and Christianity all alike condemn it, and urge us to avoid it. It injures ourselves and those whom we envy, and for our own sake and theirs we ought to extirpate the evil that has such calamitous results, and never allow it to take root in our hearts. Let us resolve to-day never to give way in future to this abominable sin, and may God bless us, and give us His grace, that will uproot all tendency to envy, and fill us with the spirit of true charity. Amen.

46. Gluttony

Overeating is a common fault among the young, and many parents fancy that it would be unkind not to give their children something to eat whenever they choose to ask for it. Children, we are told, want to eat all day long, and that is true when once the habit is formed, but they eat from habit, not from hunger. Nature does not require us to be continually eating, for we do not live in order to eat, but we eat in order to support life. Animals stop eating when their hunger is appeased, and surely you do not wish your children to be lower than the cattle! I should excuse their overeating as due to your unwise affection, if only its results were less harmful. But what will become of your children if this bad habit is not cured? You cannot keep them always at home, and when they grow up, they will have to go out into the world to earn their own living. Probably they will have enough to eat, but not too much, and if they have always been pampered at home, they will either throw up their work because they are discontented, or they will contrive to gratify their craving for more food by unlawful means and theft. No employers will keep such persons in his service, and should ever a time of real want occur, what would become of them? They would suffer far more than others, being accustomed to eat more than they require. Moreover, greedy children are liable to many diseases, that often prove incurable. You know that if you overfeed a horse, he will suffer; how much more will a child suffer, who is not so strong? If you put too much manure on a field, the good seed is choked; in the same way too much food ruins a child's health, and makes him lazy, and idleness lies at the root of all vices. Hence a glutton is as a rule wicked and vicious, whilst a moderate eater is generally respectable.

God gives us food for the support of life, and it is disgraceful for a Christian to misuse God's gift, and make it a means of ruining himself, body and soul. A man who does this, displays less sense than the beast, and shows that his sole delight is to satisfy his appetite. St. Paul bids us eat and drink to the glory of God, but it is impossible to honor Him by eating or drinking to excess.

Grown-up people are apt to drink more than is good for them, and this is more disastrous than overeating, since it robs them of their reason and sometimes of their senses. A drunkard ceases to be a human being, and becomes incapable of all rational employment. What can you expect of a man who is never sober? He neglects his wife and children, and spends on drink the money needed for their support; he loses his work, and plunges himself and his family into poverty; he sets a bad example to others, and is unable to do anything good. Drunkenness leads to deeds of violence, quarrels and murders, and when a man is tipsy, he does things that he would avoid when sober. How dreadful it is for him to die intoxicated! and yet it frequently happens that men are killed in drunken brawls. What will be their awakening in eternity? What sentence will be pronounced upon those who die impenitent, unprepared, and, by their own fault, unconscious? No reasonable person can think of such things without conceiving an intense horror of drunkenness. If you watch a drunkard, you will see him staggering along, the laughing-stock of all who come in his way. His limbs are not under his control, he can hardly speak, he has degraded himself and is using God's gifts for his ruin in time and in eternity. —And when is drunkennes most prevalent? Unhappily on Sundays and holydays, when a Christian ought to take thought for his eternal salvation, because during the week he is engaged in work and temporal concerns. What sort of a Christian is a man who gives

himself up to drunkenness on such days? He desecrates them, committing thus an offence that God cannot fail to punish, and the punishment is obvious enough, since drunkards seldom live long, and often die suddenly when they are still young. But whether they die early or not, they cannot escape chastisement in the world to come, for St. Paul includes drunkenness amongst the sins that cause men to be shut out from the kingdom of God.

Resolve, my Brethren, to live soberly, not giving way to excess in eating and drinking. Let us put on the Lord Jesus Christ, who by His fasting and mortification set us a most perfect example of temperance. Let us avoid what we know to be evil and harmful, and spend the time, that God gives us, in good works. Amen.

47. Anger

Anger is a bitter feeling of indignation and repugnance aroused by some real or imaginary wrong inflicted upon a man, and evoking in him a desire for satisfaction and revenge. If this feeling is permanent, and not merely transitory, it grows into hatred and enmity, and eventually into frenzy and madness. The fire of anger blazed up in Cain's heart, because Abel's offering was more pleasing to God than his own. The praise of David's courage and faithful service made anger, hostility and vengeance take possession of Saul. Anger degrades and dishonors men, for it is a sign of weakness and mental malady; the mind of an angry man can tolerate no contradiction, but is oversensitive, just as a diseased part of the body feels pain at the slightest touch. Reason bids us beware of allowing bitterness and hatred to sever the bond of charity, which naturally unites us; it is foolish to make too much of an accidental or even a wilful insult, and not to pardon the transgressor. It is far better

to display patience and compassion, as a physician does in dealing with a delirious patient, and not cherish feelings of anger and hatred.

If anger degrades all human beings, it is particularly shameful to a Christian, as it is a violation of the commandments, and nothing can be more completely antagonistic to the spirit of Christianity than anger, hatred and uncharitableness. Religion teaches us that, in virtue of Christ's merits, our heavenly Father has adopted us all as His children, and so we are brethren in Jesus Christ. Is it not shameful to allow a slight grievance to make us regard our brother as an enemy, and withhold from him our love? The law of love is the fundamental law of Christianity, and charity characterizes the followers of our divine Lord, who said: "This is my commandment that you love one another," "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." Anger is utterly opposed to brotherly love, which, as St. Paul says, is patient. There is no patience and no charity in us if a word or gesture is enough to rouse us to wrath. Charity is kind; but there is no kindness in us, if any insult or inconvenience fills us with indignation, and contempt of our brother, and makes us plot revenge, so that we seek occasions of wounding and injuring him. Christian charity is peaceable, and Christ was the Prince of Peace, who bequeathed His peace to us all; but there is no peace where hearts are divided by anger and hatred. Anger is no more compatible with the spirit, sanctity and perfection of Christianity, than with the dictates of common sense and reason. How can we cling to such a vice and prefer it to the glory of being true Christians and worthy followers of our divine Lord? Yet many of us, in defiance of reason and religion, give way to anger and bad temper for very trifling causes. Miserly people are infuriated by the loss of a penny or by missing some small advantage. Others lose their temper at some incon-

siderate remark, some fancied insult or contemptuous glance. Men who profess to be Christians and adherents of a crucified Redeemer, yield to rage and fury if they are deprived of some little comfort or luxury, or if their self-will is thwarted. They deserve the reproof addressed by our Saviour to the disciples, who, in their indignation because the inhabitants of a Samaritan village refused hospitality to their Master, wished to call down fire from heaven to destroy the place, but He said: "Ye know not of what spirit ye are." How could people abandon themselves to such passionate fury, if they realized that they are Christians, and that the spirit of Christianity is one of gentleness, love and peace, not anger, enmity and hatred?

Besides being altogether opposed to the spirit and perfection of Christianity, anger is injurious to the welfare and contentment of mankind. Its evil results are far-reaching, and affect both the man who gives way to wrath and the objects of his fury. Anger transforms a man; his features are distorted, his eyes flash, and sickness or even sudden death frequently follows. What must be the state of his soul, if his body is thus affected? He loses all self-control, all power of judgment, and resembles a wild beast breaking loose from its cage, or a ship cast adrift without a rudder, and exposed to the winds and waves. Alas for his victim! Carried away by his desire for vengeance, the angry man refrains from no form of insult or ill-treatment. Abusive words flow unchecked from his lips; he besmirches his neighbor's honor and good reputation, he discloses facts that Christian justice and charity would urge him to conceal, and daily experience shows that anger drives men to poison, betray and kill one another, thus inflicting injuries that never can be repaired. How can domestic peace and happiness exist where people give way to outbreaks of fury? All the members of a household, in which anger reigns supreme, appear depressed and anxious only to

avoid the storms of reproaches and abuse to which they are accustomed. Children shrink in fear from their parents, and grow up disliking and even hating them, because their father and mother, instead of gently correcting them for childish naughtiness, angrily curse and abuse them. Married people avoid having anything to do with one another, dreading outbursts of rage, and sometimes separate and thus sever the bond that should unite them, simply because the wife dreads her husband's anger, and this fear has driven all love and confidence out of her heart. Anger is indeed a vice opposed to the spirit and protection of Christianity, injurious to both its slaves and their victims, destructive of all peace and contentment, and doubly odious to us, because as Christians we should seek to promote the happiness of others as well as of ourselves. Let us do our best to uproot this vice, and resist the first sign of anger, so that it may not get the upper hand, and render us incapable of withstanding its force. At first it can easily be repressed, though afterwards it is well-nigh irresistible; therefore let us try to control it in the spirit of Christianity by replacing it with kind, gentle, peaceable and patient charity. If we value our own peace of mind and domestic happiness, we shall exert ourselves to control our anger and to practice charity. Let us remember the threat uttered by our divine Lord: "He that is angry with his brother is in danger of the judgment." "He that hateth his brother, is a murderer." Let us take warning and repress our anger, and be gentle, loving and patient; then we shall not be in danger of the judgment, but worthy of God's love and blessing. **Amen.**

48. Moral Indifference

Those who are indifferent to morality often profess great modesty, and take credit to themselves for letting others do as they like, for not meddling with what does not concern them, and for wishing to live peaceably with their neighbors. Their indifference assumes the apearance of Christian charity, which endures everything, displays no indignation and resents nothing. The fact that it can thus conceal itself under the cloak of virtue renders indifference peculiarly dangerous and disastrous in its results.

A man is morally indifferent if he does not care to hear the truth, and keeps silence when he ought to speak, or raises only a feeble and half-hearted protest against evil. It is the duty of every Christian to warn his neighbors when he sees them plunging into ruin, and not to look on unmoved. Still more does it behoove rulers and superiors, who have authority over others, to deter them from wrongdoing. Moral indifference is a base and shameful thing, and causes indescribable mischief. It inspires those who are not actually vicious to continue with courage and audacity in their sins. If a sinner, not yet hardened, remains without rebuke or punishment, he says to himself: "I have done wrong, but nothing happened," and so he continues in his evil ways, and vice, being like a fire, it spreads far and wide unless it is speedily checked. Thus moral indifference not only encourages wickedness, but it is a terrible scourge, bringing shameful disorders on individuals and communities. What guarantee is there for the maintenance of order and discipline, when the spirit of insubordination knows that it will encounter no rebuke? Indifference actually promotes injustice, oppression of the weak, and persecution of the honest; for it permits an unjust man to act as he pleases, turns a deaf ear to the cries of his victims, and raises

no protest against his iniquity. A man who is morally indolent incurs the guilt of sins, that he has not himself committed, but that are due to his indifference, and so he is the cause of misery to himself and others.

Have we no reason to reproach ourselves for our indifference? How can it be right for Christians to listen quietly to blasphemous conversations, ridicule of our holy religion, abuse of priests, uncharitable slanders against innocent people and remarks savoring of impurity Ought they not to speak boldly in defence of God's honor and of justice? Alas for parents who indulge their children, and never correct their unruly passions and inclinations, and whose exaggerated affection forces them to say no word of remonstrance, when the children, given them by Almighty God, plunge into shameful excesses! Are not such parents responsible for all the mischief and scandal that results in Church and State? Alas for masters and mistresses who tolerate disorderly and scandalous behavior on the part of persons in their employ, and pay no attention to their evil tendencies! Such employers will have to answer for neglecting their responsibilities. Alas for a government that makes no attempt to reform abuses and raise the standard of morals, but allows gross injustice to prevail among the people, and enforces no respect for God and His law!

Let us see what can be done to remedy this disastrous indifference. It would be a serious mistake to suppose that zeal to combat indifference ought to make us extremely anxious to keep watch over our neighbors' words and actions, or to examine minutely, as it were with a magnifying glass, everything that they do. Such behavior would as a rule do no good at all, and would be destructive of peace and good will. Our Lord says that every man is bound to watch over his brother, but He did not intend this vigilance to be insulting,

so as to sever the bond of peace and charity. As a general rule it is enough if we do not deliberately close our eyes and ears to the transgressions of our neighbors, but take notice of them when we may hope to effect some amendment. Those whom God has placed in positions of responsibility must, however, exercise greater watchfulness and zeal in supervising their subordinates, though even in this case all prying and unpleasant inquisitiveness should be avoided. The best way to overcome moral indifference is to think often of the happiness of heaven, to live in the presence of God, to delight in contemplating the holy examples of others, and to resolve frequently to do good works to the best of our ability; then we are not likely to fail in the discharge of our duty. Amen.

49. Sins Against the Holy Ghost and Other Particular Sins

Sins against the Holy Ghost are so called, because they are committed against the better knowledge imparted to us by the Holy Ghost. People guilty of such sins resemble sick persons who not only refuse all remedies, but do their utmost to aggravate their malady. Hence our Lord says that whosoever speaks against the Holy Ghost (*i. e.*, blasphemes or acts in a way contrary to His teaching) shall not be forgiven either in this world or the next. It is impossible to hope for repentance in the case of one whose disposition is so perverse. Men sin against the Holy Ghost by (1) presumption, (2) despair, (3) resisting the known truth, (4) envy of another's spiritual good, (5) obstinacy in sin, (6) final impenitence.

(1) It is a sin against the Holy Ghost to sin whilst presumptuously relying upon God's mercy. Sinners of this kind always hope for forgiveness, although they take no pains to amend, and continue in their evil ways; they even fancy themselves secure from

retribution, because in the past no punishment has been inflicted on them. In the Old Testament we read: "Say not: 'The mercy of the Lord is great, He will have mercy on the multitude of my sins.' Say not: 'I have sinned, and what harm hath befallen me?' For the most High is a patient rewarder . . . Add not sin upon sin." (Ecclus v, 6, 4, 5.)

(2) It is a sin against the Holy Ghost to despair of God's mercy, and to regard conversion as impossible, because the sins committed appear too numerous and too great to be forgiven. The result of brooding in this way over one's sins is despair, and a man who has given way to this sin will not even ask for grace to be converted. After Cain through envy had killed his brother Abel, and God called upon him to account for what he had done, he did not seek forgiveness, but exclaimed in despair: "My iniquity is greater than that I may deserve pardon" (Gen., iv, 13).

(3) It is a sin against the Holy Ghost to resist the known truth. Thanks to the Holy Ghost every Catholic is taught his religion and receives the Sacrament of Confirmation, and consequently he sins against the Holy Ghost if he acts in a manner opposed to his better knowledge, and falls away from the faith. These sins generally proceed from pride, immorality or hatred, and sometimes from a desire of worldly advantage. Many sinners know that they have done wrong, but refuse to do penance. Many heretics are aware that theirs is not the true religion, but they do not submit to the Church, either because they will not acknowledge themselves to have been in error, or because they dread some temporal loss. Some Catholics cease to practice their religion not because they have lost their faith, but because they are proud and self-willed, or wish to get on in the world, or cling to their godless way of life. All these

persons resist what they know to be the truth, and sin against the Holy Ghost.

(4) Another similar sin is committed by those who envy another's spiritual good. If it is wrong to begrudge another his temporal advantages, it is obviously still more wrong to envy him the grace bestowed on him by the Holy Ghost.

(5) Obstinacy in sin and refusal to listen to admonition is another offence against the Holy Ghost, which is committed by all who pay no attention to what they hear in sermons and in the confessional, because they have no desire for amendment. They harden their hearts and reject all good influences.

(6) Consequently the obdurate remain impenitent, and bring destruction upon themselves. All who postpone doing penance risk dying in the state of final impenitence, for many are incapable of making a good confession on their deathbed. To such may be applied our Lord's words: "You shall seek me, and you shall die in your sin."

Some sins are known as sins crying to heaven for vengeance because their shame and malice are so great that they seem to provoke God and force Him to punish them. These are:

1. Wilful murder.
2. The sin of Sodom.
3. Oppression of the poor.
4. Defrauding laborers of their wages.

St. Paul warns us further against making ourselves answerable for the sins of others either by direct cooperation or by not attempting to prevent them. We may cause or share the guilt of another's sin in nine ways: (1) By counsel, (2) by command, (3) by

consent, (4) by provocation, (5) by praise or flattery, (6) by concealment, (7) by being a partner in the sin.

My Brethren: we are all liable to sin, but we should be very careful not to incur the guilt of the sins of others. Beware of encouraging or advising any one to do wrong, or of commending and trying to justify a sinful action, for thus you will share the guilt of it. Never be too indulgent towards evil, but strive with all your might to hinder it. Amen.

50. Virtue and Christian Perfection

True virtue in a Christian consists in a persevering effort to order all his thoughts and actions in accordance with our Lord's teaching and example. Jesus Christ was obedient even unto death to His Heavenly Father, and was filled with such charity as to be capable of loving His worst enemies, and a Christian, knowing this, will likewise strive to obey God in every way, and to love his neighbors, and even his enemies, as himself. He will never think that he has completely realized his aim, and will consequently spare himself no pains in order to attain greater perfection. In the course of this endeavor he stoutly resists all temptations to self-indulgence, denying himself what is pleasant, if it be contrary to God's law, and enduring all hardships that God's will imposes upon him. His one great desire is to do God's will and at the same time to work out his own salvation.

A Christian, who acts thus, possesses true virtue, and his virtue is enhanced by the purity of his motives, his zeal in good works, his energy in overcoming sensual inclinations and his steadfastness in the pursuit of justice.

A good will is therefore the chief thing, and this good will reveals

itself in a disposition to obey God's law. Looked at from this point of view, all virtue is identical, but it has several aspects or forms according to the object with which it is concerned. Thus virtue may manifest itself as humility, gentleness, sorrow for sin, desire for perfection, mercy, purity, peaceableness or patience. Mere outward respectability is not virtue, any more than the setting of a diamond is the diamond itself; nor do isolated good actions constitute virtue. Many Jews and pagans performed great and noble acts, which were not, however, virtuous, because as a rule the good intention was lacking. Virtue is not a transitory emotion, nor is it scrupulosity, it is a permanent effort to do right. Let us beware of self-deception and aim at acquiring true virtue, for Christ says: "Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt., v, 20). Amen.

51. The Three Theological Virtues

The three theological virtues, faith, hope and charity, are the sources whence all interior and exterior acts of virtue proceed, and we accomplish more or less good in proportion to the degree in which we possess these virtues. They gain strength with practice, and therefore it is highly beneficial to bring them frequently before our minds.

Are these three virtues called theological because God bestows them directly upon us? No; in this respect they have no advantage over the moral virtues. We call them theological because they relate immediately to God. He is the object of our faith, hope and love, hence all these virtues have a common motive and object, and this fact raises them above the other virtues of Christianity. It is true that they look at God under different aspects; faith regards

Him as the eternal truth and wisdom; hope as infinite in His mercy; power, and charity as our supreme, incalculable good. But these are all aspects of the same God, to whom the soul turns in the practice of these virtues. This is the most perfect way in which it can turn to Him in this life, whilst it cannot yet enjoy the direct contemplation of God, and can see Him only by faith in a dark manner, as St. Paul says. By hope it trusts that it will one day be admitted to His presence, and by charity it begins here the work that it will carry on for ever in heaven. The soul that turns thus to God, is never sent empty away.

Faith is a true offering of the understanding, made to God's infinite truth and wisdom, without hesitation, argument or doubt. A Christian accepts as right whatever God has said.

Hope is a sacrifice of the will, since a Christian brings his will into conformity with God's promises, and hopes to receive what God pledges Himself to give. Charity involves the greatest sacrifice of all, since we withdraw our affections from creatures and fix them on the Creator, loving nothing apart from God, and clinging to Him with our whole heart, soul and strength.

These virtues bring us into close connection with God, and charity is the bond that unites our hearts with Him, although faith and hope both play their respective parts, the former by representing God to us as infinite goodness, and the latter by stimulating our desire to be united with Him.

It is indeed most beneficial for us to consider these great virtues, and still better to practice them, both in life and in death.

Constant exercise develops virtue, and every act of virtue serves to obtain for us the remission of part of the punishment due to sin, and an increase of sanctifying grace. These results are common to

all good works performed in the state of grace, but there are certain times when the exercise of the theological virtues is especially advantageous.

In times of affliction, no matter of what kind, nothing helps us so much to preserve our composure and patience as a lively faith in God's providence, a firm hope that our ardent wishes will be fulfilled, and charity, that enables us to rejoice even in the midst of tribulation.

The theological virtues render us strong to resist all kinds of temptation, and he who can readily have recourse to them, is provided with a powerful weapon against the assaults of the evil one. He refuses to enter upon any discussion or argument with the enemies of his soul, for faith reminds him of God's presence, hope suggests to him the desire for the joys of heaven and indifference towards earthly delights, whilst charity puts to flight the powers of darkness.

At moments of distress of mind, the theological virtues supply a Christian with consolation. If he feels fear of secret sins, he knows that charity can obliterate all faults, and he is calm. If he doubts whether he has resisted some sudden temptation, he may be sure that a soul accustomed frequently to make acts of faith, hope and charity, will not easily yield to sin. If he dreads God's judgment and is anxious regarding his own salvation, he can cast himself with childlike confidence into God's merciful arms, and leave everything to Him. It is far more sensible to act thus, than to torment one's self with incessant doubts and scruples. Whoever frequently calls to mind the theological virtues will find them a great safeguard against excessive fear of death. A Christian living in the state of grace, or at least promptly returning to it after each lapse into sin, has no reason to fear death, which may overtake him suddenly, but

will never find him unprepared. At his last hour his habit of practicing the theological virtues affords him unspeakable consolation, when through pain or weakness he is incapable of making long prayers, and can do nothing but unite himself with his Maker by means of acts of faith, hope and charity. He will not, however, be able to accomplish even this unless he has previously been accustomed to make such acts, for unhappily we cannot, when dying, learn to do what we have neglected during the rest of our lives. Pope Benedict XIV. granted an indulgence of seven years to all Catholics for each repetition of these acts, together with a plenary indulgence at the hour of death. It is plainly the wish of the Church that by frequently making these acts of faith, hope and charity, we should either completely escape the pains of purgatory, or shorten our detention there as far as possible. Let us therefore accustom ourselves to make these acts, not only every day, but every hour, in thought if not actually in word, and let us persevere in this holy practice until faith and hope give place to sight, and charity attains her full perfection. Amen.

THE MEANS OF GRACE

1. Grace

Every Christian ought to possess living faith, since a mere knowledge of divine truth, unaccompanied by behavior in accordance with it, is dead faith, and of no value in God's sight. The consideration of the demands made upon us by the law, on the one hand, and of our own weakness and wickedness on the other, forces upon us the conviction that we fall far short of the standard required of us, and fills us with fear regarding the past and despondency regarding the future. Conscience tells us that we have broken the law, and it seems only too probable that we shall do so again. We need to be reassured, so that we may hope not to suffer eternally in consequence of our past sins, and to avoid such sins in future. Christianity supplies us with the comfort and assurance that we require, for Jesus Christ tells us that God not only forgives our sins, but bestows upon us supernatural strength, which enables us to live and act in a way pleasing to Him.

This supernatural strength is called divine grace; it is an unmerited favor, a free gift on God's part; it is neither a consequence of, nor a reward for, any good action that we have performed, for in that case it would not be grace at all. It is given us by God in His goodness and mercy, in order that our innate tendency to evil and also evil itself may be overcome and destroyed, and a better disposition, leading to true amendment, may gradually be restored in our hearts, and thus we may eventually attain to eternal salvation.

We distinguish two kinds of grace, sanctifying and actual. The former makes us children of God, and strengthens the union between us and our Creator. Actual grace is a supernatural gift, en-

lightening our minds to see what is right, and inclining our wills to do and love what we perceive to be good. All that we have and are we owe to God. Sometimes we may think that by our industry or in some other way we have contributed towards a good result, but more careful examination will convince us that our faculties and their employment, as well as the resulting success, depended upon circumstances over which we had no control, but which were arranged by God's providence before our birth.

Without God's grace we cannot perform any perfectly good work, gaining us merit for the life to come. All our attempts to please God and to keep the commandments, as well as all our power to do right are His gifts. Hence St. Paul writes to the Philippians: "It is God who worketh in you, both to will and to accomplish, according to His good will" (ii, 13). God works within us whenever we plan and carry out anything good, whenever we believe divine truth and order our life in accordance with it, and whenever we persevere in doing right and in resisting temptation. Our Lord says: "No man can come to me, except the Father, who hath sent me, draw him" (John, vi, 44); and St. Paul prays that God will give the Ephesians "the spirit of wisdom and of revelation, in the knowledge of him" (Ephes., i, 17).

We derive great benefit from the doctrine regarding the necessity of grace. If ever a sense of our own weakness overpowers us, and we question our ability to do right, faith in God's assistance will renew our courage, so that, like St. Paul, we say: "I can do all things in Him who strengtheneth me" (Phil., iv, 13). If we are depressed by the difficulties that we encounter, the conviction that God gives grace and help to all who honestly strive to please Him, assures us that "He who hath begun a good work in us will perfect it" (Phil., i, 6). If pride takes possession of our hearts, suggesting thoughts

of self-complacency, which would make us harsh towards others, religion reminds us of the words: "What hast thou, O man, that thou hast not received? Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? To his own Lord he standeth or falleth. And he shall stand! for God is able to make him stand" (Rom., xiv, 4).

God never withholds His help from any who really try to please Him. He wishes us to do right, and gives us the strength that we need. We receive His grace by various channels; through the Sacraments, the teaching of Christ, or His direct influence upon our hearts and minds. It is a great privilege to be Christians, and we should show our gratitude by acknowledging our indebtedness to God, and by doing our best to live worthily of our high calling.

God's grace does not work irresistibly, so as to force us to do right. We often see what is good, and do what is bad; or we make good resolutions, but never carry them into effect, because we act in direct opposition to God's will.

Moral amendment is undoubtedly the effect of God's grace and the work of the Holy Ghost, but we are not compelled against our will to avoid wrong and do right. Grace acts on the mind, by supplying light and knowledge, and on the will by furnishing motives and reasons. It demands, and by no means precludes our co-operation. It stimulates and sustains us, but we must voluntarily do our part towards working out our salvation. Grace does not destroy free will. Holy Scripture teaches that we owe God's assistance to our Redeemer Jesus Christ, for He both begins and perfects our salvation. Through Him we look forward to eternal happiness, and receive supernatural strength to obey God's law. His merits purchase for us these and other graces, and that is why He says of Himself: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me" (John, xiv, 6).

Let us, my brethren, pray earnestly and with confidence for God's grace, and come frequently to the Holy Sacraments in which we receive it. We must ask continually for this grace, and God will not refuse it to us in the Sacraments. Amen.

2. Sanctifying Grace

"The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Ghost" (Rom., v, 5). Most of the fathers think that St. Paul, when writing these words, referred to sanctifying grace, which renders us worthy of God's love. How happy are those who know how to appreciate, guard and increase the grace bestowed upon them!

Can any creature be worthy of his Creator's love? Is it possible for the infinite Being, who contains within Himself all perfection, to find anything outside Himself that it worthy to be loved? Yes, it is possible, although this assertion may sound presumptuous to the worldly wise, who have not the faith. If we do right and possess sanctifying grace, we deserve God's love, because, in virtue of that grace, we are His friends and even His children. Jesus Christ Himself tells us that we can be His children. Jesus Christ Himself tells us that we can be His friends. "O wonderful condescension of divine mercy!" exclaims St. Gregory, "we do not deserve to be God's servants, and yet He calls us friends." We do not indeed deserve it, as long as we live according to the flesh, but we become worthy as soon as sanctifying grace confers a supernatural dignity upon us.

If God's friends are worthy objects of His love, far more so are His children, and we become God's children by adoption, if we receive the spirit of adoption. This adoption is not merely external, but internal and efficacious, since in virtue of it the soul is born

anew, and endowed with fresh life and faculties. It is an adoption that approximates very closely to a natural birth, and is in fact a divine regeneration. The expression may seem exaggerated, but in a sense it is literally true, inasmuch as the just really participate in the divine nature. It is a marvelous fact that the same divine nature which the Father communicated to His mystically begotten Son, and which was united in time with the most sacred humanity of Jesus Christ, in another but no less real manner is united with the soul of every just person, who thus becomes truly the child of God, the brother of His only begotten Son, and consequently also the worthy object of His love.

It is impossible for man to be the friend and child of God unless God becomes his friend and Father; both result from the same outpouring of sanctifying grace, and we cannot doubt that God really loves those whose friend and Father He condescends to be.

When we have a friend, we delight in his company, and wish for him all the good things that we desire for ourselves. How exactly and faithfully does God fulfil the obligations of friendship! He associates with the just, reminding them continually of His presence and power, and speaks to them often in their hearts, encouraging and consoling them. But this is not all, for He even dwells within them, as in a temple consecrated to Himself. God resides in the soul of the just in a very special manner. Jesus says: "If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and will make our abode with him" (John, xiv, 23). Thus the whole adorable Trinity, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, will come and abide with us—is not this the love of a true friend? Moreover, it is precisely through this love that God intends to bestow upon the just all the happiness that He Himself enjoys. If such is His love as a friend, what will be His love as a

Father? No tongue can describe the loving care with which this Father watches over His children, encourages them to do right, protects them from dangers and orders everything for their spiritual good. Moreover, He prepares for them an inheritance in Heaven which their position as His adopted children entitles them to claim as a right. How glorious is this inheritance! how permanent and secure! for none can rob them of it or diminish its value.

You understand, I hope, how much God loves the just, *i. e.*, those who possess sanctifying grace, and you see what an inestimable benefit it confers, since it makes us not only worthy but actual objects of God's love. Let us always be on our guard to preserve this precious treasure; only sin can deprive us of it, but unhappily we are so liable to fall that we can never be sufficiently cautious, and when we deem ourselves safe, it comes upon us unawares.. "See therefore, brethren, how you walk circumspectly," avoiding every occasion of evil, shunning even little faults, controlling your passions, mortifying your desires, keeping watch over your senses and continually crucifying the flesh. Let us listen to St. Paul's warning, and apply these most necessary means of safeguarding ourselves against sin, and at the same time let us pray fervently that God will never withdraw His love from us. Amen.

3. Good Works

Good works are of the utmost importance, since without them there is no truly Christian life, no justice and no salvation. But what is a good work? In what does the excellence of any work consist?

1. To be really good, our works must be good in themselves; it is obvious that a thistle does not bear figs, and what is in itself bad

can never under any circumstances be good. For instance, it cannot be right to steal money in order to spend it in charity. Therefore it is a mistake to suppose that our works are good if we have a good intention; the works in themselves must be at least permissible, if not actually good.

2. For a man's works to be truly good, he must have a good intention. A good intention cannot render an action, that is bad in itself, good; nor can an action, that is good in itself, be considered a good work if it is performed with a bad intention. For instance, almsgiving is in itself good, but if a man gives alms in order to be praised, his action is not a good work, because his intention is base. No action is good that is performed from motives of self-gratification or self-advantage. Hence our Lord warns us not to seek the praise of men, lest we lose the merit of our good works.

What do we mean by a good intention? It is primarily love of God, and then love of goodness and love of our neighbor.

3. Finally, if a work is to be good, it must be done in Christ. What does this mean? The works of the old man are all done in sin and injustice; those of the new man, our Redeemer, are works of justice. We are required to put on Christ, and work in Him, and then our actions will be just. When we speak of working in Christ we mean acting in conformity with His commands, in His spirit, whilst being ourselves in the state of grace. If we act thus, our Saviour works in us.

Unless we are to be for ever miserable, we must do good works. We must be good trees bearing good fruit, and rooted in Christ by faith and charity. If we are justified in and through Him, our works cannot fail to be good and just.

4. Good Intentions

When we do any work, everything depends upon our intention, the object that we have in view. If our intention is pure, and if God is the aim and object of all our undertakings, we have no reason to fear; but if our intentions are impure and sinful, if we have some other aim and object apart from God, we may well fear for the result. As I said, everything depends upon our intention.

Whatever we do for God's sake is good, for just as everything proceeds from Him, so must everything ultimately be referred to Him; He is the beginning and the end of all creatures, and man should intend to conform in all his actions to God's will, and to do everything in the name and for the glory of God. Such an intention is good in itself, and its results are also good. If you turn to God before engaging in your daily work, and offer up to Him all your difficulties, resolving to refrain from sin during the day; if, as you work, you ask His aid and the preservation of your health and strength; if you tolerate no disorder in your household, but by word and example encourage your dependents to serve God faithfully; if you make a good use of His gifts and of your abundance give alms for the benefit of the poor and for the glory of God—then your intention is good, and, its results being also good, your business will prosper, and you will live in peace and happiness, perceiving God's help in and blessing on all your undertakings.

Train up your children in the right way, provide them with opportunities of education; keep them, as long as you can, from occasions of sin and bad companions; teach them to be industrious and show them that nothing in the world will make them happy, unless they love God and do their duty. Pray God daily to be the Father of your children, and to watch over them always. If you

have these good intentions with regard to your children, you may be sure that they will love and honor you, and be your comfort and support in your old age. They will be faithful servants of God, and some day will with you enjoy eternal happiness in heaven.

Be careful for your own spiritual welfare, and remember that you were created not for this world, but for the next, and must be solicitous for eternity rather than for your temporal prosperity. Make it your delight to pray and to receive the Sacraments; avoid for love of God all occasions of sin, and waste no opportunity that occurs of doing good. In this way your intentions will be good, and God will enlighten your mind and help you to amend your faults, by giving you His grace to guide you in all that you undertake.

Bear with patience the trials of this life, remembering that they are all sent by God, and that as Christians we ought to suffer something for love of Jesus Christ, who suffered so much for our sake. Thus you will have a good intention in your sorrows, and God will help you to bear your cross, supplying you with inward consolation, and bringing you at last by way of the cross to your home in heaven.

You see how good intentions have good results, and if you make God your aim in all things, your intentions cannot fail to be good. Direct your thoughts to Him before beginning any work, and say: "Lord, in Thy name, for Thy glory and love of Thee I desire to do all my work. All my intentions and thoughts tend towards Thee, and with Thy help I will begin and end my task." Speak thus to God, and you will soon see the results of your good intentions. Amen.

5. Justification

In spite of receiving help from above, we frequently disobey God's law, although the observance of the commandments is the way of salvation. We fail in doing our duty, fall into sin and deprive ourselves of the hope of eternal happiness. We should be most miserable, if we had no assurance of forgiveness; but Christ teaches explicitly that penitent sinners can be restored to God's favor and justified. Justification is not simply a removal of the penalty due to sin, for if God is to remit the punishment incurred by a sinner there must be in his heart something that renders him deserving of such remission. God neither inflicts nor remits punishment arbitrarily.

Nor is justification a mere declaration of justice, such as is made when a man is acquitted of some charge brought against him; for God, who searcheth the heart, cannot possibly regard a man as other than he really is. Nor is justification an ascription to the sinner of the sanctity and justice of Christ, for although these are the ground of our justification, they are not justification itself. Justification involves the remission of both the guilt and penalty of our sins; it renews our spirit and pours the love of God into our hearts, so as to dwell and work within them; it makes us act in a way pleasing to God and restores us to the position in which we were before our fall into sin. Justification is something interior, and all the terms used in Holy Scripture to designate it, such as conversion, regeneration, renewal and sanctification, indicate some interior change.

It is plain that man cannot merit justification, and that it is impossible for him to become holy simply by employing his natural faculties. He would have to begin by being morally good, as other-

wise we should have a result without a cause. Therefore the change must be effected by God's grace, which is called for this reason *sanctifying grace.* A man who, relying on God's inexhaustible goodness and mercy, continued to sin, would be guilty of shameful ingratitude and presumption.

In order to receive the grace of justification, we must prepare ourselves; for it is not enough to believe that God will forgive us for the sake of Christ's merits, but we must believe further that He rewards the just and punishes the wicked, and cannot possibly take pleasure in sin, nor bestow on the sinner the rewards promised to the righteous. This belief inspires us with wholesome fear, which begets horror for sin, as the reason for our forfeiting God's love. The consideration of divine justice does not plunge a sinner into despair, but makes him hope for pardon, relying on God's mercy, since Jesus died in order to effect our reconciliation with Him. Perceiving the boundless love of God for man, the sinner begins to love Him as the source of all sanctity and justice, and this love arouses in his heart a horror of sin, that grows more intense in proportion to the intensity of his love. He resolves to lead a better life, to keep the commandments, and to use the means of grace offered by our holy religion. This doctrine may be summed up as follows:

1. In order to obtain the grace of justification, we must believe that God abhors and punishes sin.

2. We must acknowledge our sin and hope for pardon, relying on the merits of Jesus Christ.

3. We must abhor our sin as a wrong done to God.

4. We must do our best to prevent its consequences from injuring ourselves and others.

5. We must resolve to amend our way of life in accordance with God's will.

6. We must have recourse to the Sacraments.

As soon as a man is justified in God's sight, his works become meritorious, and he can grow in sanctity, advancing day by day on the path of perfection, since in addition to sanctifying grace he receives also actual grace, which enables him to keep the commandments and do good works. Yet even a just man cannot be completely free from anxiety, since he is always liable to lose his justice, and actually does lose it by grievous sin. Still if he relapses into sin, he should not despair, since he may be restored to his former state of justice. Let him trust God and do his best to improve, and then God will certainly not forsake him. Amen.

6. The Sacraments in General

The grace of God is indispensable to us, if we are to be just and pleasing to Him, and able to do good and meritorious works. God the Father promised us this grace, God the Son acquired it for us, and God the Holy Ghost desires to communicate it to us. This is undoubtedly true, but nevertheless our nature craves perceptible signs, by means of which God gives His graces and applies to us the merits of Jesus Christ. It was to satisfy this craving on the part of human nature that our Lord instituted the Sacraments, which are outward and visible signs, ordained by Christ Himself, as the means whereby we receive God's grace and interior sanctification. They are outward signs or actions, perceptible to the senses, and performed whilst certain words are uttered; and their effect is to produce or increase sanctifying grace; *e. g.*, in baptism. This production or augmentation of grace, combined with an outward and

visible sign, is not the work of nature, nor can it be performed by any creature, but only by a divine power, such as resides in Jesus Christ. It was He who united the interior working of grace in our souls with certain exterior signs. For instance, He instituted baptism as a channel of grace.

In human life there are seven occasions when we stand in need of peculiar grace.

1. At our entrance into this world and, 2. at our departure from it.

Being Adam's descendants we are born in sin, and are therefore unworthy to be admitted to the Kingdom of God. Consequently it is most essential for every human being to be born again spiritually and again rendered fit for admission to eternal life. This rebirth takes place at Baptism. When we come to die, we need abundant grace to stand firm in our last conflict, and to endure to the end. This grace is given us in Extreme Unction.

3. At our start in life, which is apt to be full of peril. For this reason Christ instituted Confirmation.

4. Whenever we fall into sin, to enable us to rise again and obtain forgiveness we have the holy Sacrament of Penance.

5. After our restoration to grace, we still require fresh strength, and obtain it in the holy Sacrament of the Altar.

6. Matrimony, which is of the utmost importance to the human race, was raised by Christ to the dignity of a Sacrament.

7. The Sacrament of Holy Orders was instituted by Christ for the purpose of forming a priesthood.

There are therefore seven Sacraments, and they were enumerated by the last General Council and are mentioned in the writings of the Fathers.

Some of the Sacraments confer sanctifying grace where it did not previously exist; others increase grace already present. Some are necessary to all men, others only to particular individuals. Some can be received once only, others frequently. Some can be administered exclusively by a bishop, others also by priests.

They are administered with various ceremonies determined by the Catholic Church, but these ceremonies do not belong to the essence of the Sacraments, and are designed to call forth and maintain feelings of confidence, humility, gratitude, love, etc. They must not, however, be omitted or modified arbitrarily and without real necessity. The efficacy of the Sacraments depends, not on the person administering them, but on God's will and the merits of Jesus Christ.

As often as we receive a Sacrament, certain preparation is required of us; this is indispensable, if we are to receive God's grace, for whoever receives a Sacrament without due preparation, not only deprives himself of the graces conferred by means of the Sacrament, but also commits a grievous sin.

It is therefore a mistake to suppose that the Sacraments accomplish everything, without any co-operation on our part; or that we are very religious if we receive the Sacraments very often although we may have made no proper preparation.

The test of a due reception of the Sacraments is our progress and growth in virtue.

Let us thank God for instituting the Sacraments, since they are the channels of the graces necessary to our salvation. Let us resolve never to dishonor them in any way, and never to receive them without careful preparation. Amen.

7. Baptism

A certain kind of baptism was common among the Jews, who immersed in water any Gentile converts to Judaism. The object of this ceremony was to purify them, as it were, from paganism, and the converts were regarded as regenerate. This baptism was, however, merely symbolical, typifying, but not effecting, a spiritual rebirth and purification of the soul.

When John, our Lord's forerunner, came to the Jordan and began to preach in preparation for the advent of Christ, he baptized his followers, *i. e.*, he immersed them in the river in token of penance. He wished them to realize the necessity of repentance, if they were to be cleansed from sin. The baptism of John was a ceremony, representing, but not effecting, the removal of guilt. St. John himself acknowledged this when he said: "I indeed baptize you in water unto penance; but he that shall come after me is mightier than I . . . he shall baptize you in the Holy Ghost and fire."

Finally Christ came, the Saviour of the world, the one whom St. John had foretold as mightier than himself, and He instituted baptism as the means whereby a man could be spiritually born again, and filled with grace by the Holy Spirit, and rendered fit for admission to the kingdom of heaven. This was indicated by our Lord when He came to receive the baptism of John in the Jordan, and it was stated by Him explicitly, when He said to Nicodemus: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John, iii, 5). Finally He instructed His disciples to baptize all nations, and they were most careful to carry out this command. Thus Jesus really instituted baptism of a kind totally different from that of the Jews and also from that of St. John.

The outward sign in baptism is the water flowing whilst the words prescribed by our Lord are spoken.

It is certain that water must be used, for our Saviour said: "Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God." St. Paul too speaks of the Church as "cleansed by the laver of water" (Ephes., v, 26). In early times baptism was always administered by immersion, but subsequently by sprinkling or pouring water upon the head of the person to be baptized. The benefits conferred by baptism are very great, inasmuch as it cleanses us from all sin, removes all the penalty due to sin, bestows sanctifying grace, and incorporates us into the Church of Jesus Christ.

1. *Baptism cleanses from sin.* Hence in his first public discourse, St. Peter said: "Do penance, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts, ii, 38). St. Paul, addressing the Corinthians after their baptism, said: "But you are washed; but you are sanctified; but you are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor., vi, 11). Christ died for men, in order to obtain for them the grace of the regeneration effected in baptism by the words of the baptismal formula, rendering the person baptized clean and holy, and capable of further sanctification. Concupiscence, *i. e.* a tendency to evil, remains, it is true, after baptism, but it is not sin, although resulting from and tending to sin.

2. *Baptism remits all the penalty due to sin.* St. Paul says that those who are baptized are dead to sin, and that if they be dead with Christ, they shall live also together with Him. This has been the invariable doctrine of the Church in every age, and accounts

for the fact that no penance is ever imposed on those who have just been baptized.

3. *Those who are baptized receive sanctifying grace.* St. Paul writes to Titus: "When . . . our Saviour appeared, . . . according to his mercy He saved us, by the laver of regeneration, and renovation of the Holy Ghost . . . that being justified by his grace, we may be heirs according to hope of life everlasting" (Tit., iii, 4-7). Thus we become children of God and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven.

4. *The baptized become members of the Catholic Church,* and participate thenceforth in all the privileges of membership, for in one Spirit were we all baptized into one body, and are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus (1 Cor., xii, 13; Gal., iii, 26).

We can never thank God enough for the benefits received in Holy Baptism. Let us often think of them and do our best not to waste them, but rather to live and die in the name of Him who bestowed them upon us. Amen.

8. The Necessity of Baptism

All men, being descendants of Adam, are born with a nature that is sinful and incapable of true virtue, hence all require to be born again. Our Lord tells us this plainly, for He says: "Amen, amen, I say to thee, unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Ghost, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of God" (John, iii, 5). Adults as well as children need regeneration, and both alike must be baptized, if they are to enjoy the benefits conferred by baptism. As, however, children cannot hold false or perverted principles, they are not required to possess faith as a preliminary to baptism; only the tendency to evil has to be eliminated in their case. Baptism

cannot have so decided and immediate an effect upon a child as upon an adult. As a moral aid to sanctification baptism must be preceded by due preparation, and must be employed for the purpose for which it was designed. Now a child cannot be prepared for baptism; the god-parents make a profession of faith on his behalf, but a time must come when the child assumes his own responsibilities and takes upon himself the obligations that they incurred in his name. This occurs when he reaches the age of reason, and can be instructed in our holy religion. It is then that he becomes bound to consider for himself what took place at his baptism, and what duties and obligations he incurred. He must then be convinced of the sanctity and importance of the Sacrament that he received in his infancy, and renew the promises made at that time on his behalf. As soon as a child attains the age of reason, he becomes capable of independent belief, volition and action, and these faculties gain strength and permanence through the baptism already received. The child thenceforth freely and gladly professes his faith in Christ's divine teaching, and the remembrance of the obligations that he has incurred urges him to respect the truth and virtue inculcated by our Lord, and to resist the suggestions of evil more and more stoutly, as his spirit grows in true honesty and sanctity.

Although Holy Baptism is the means appointed by God for making men holy and heirs of the kingdom of heaven, those who cannot receive it, may nevertheless obtain the grace of the Sacrament, if they turn to God with their whole heart, repent of their sins, trust and love God as their Father, and are willing to avail themselves of all the prescribed means of salvation. They are said to have the baptism of desire.

All who die as martyrs for the sake of righteousness likewise

receive the grace of baptism. Whoever reverences God so deeply as rather to sacrifice life itself and die a death of agony, than act in opposition to His holy will, must certainly love God above all things, and by the baptism of blood they are undoubtedly admitted to the happiness promised to all who love Him.

The right to administer and to regulate the administration of baptism was given by Christ to the apostles and their successors, *i. e.* to the bishops and priests of the Church. Deacons are also permitted to baptize, and in case of necessity anybody can administer this Sacrament, provided that the essential parts of the ceremony are not omitted.

Adults who, not having been baptized in infancy, desire baptism, must make due preparation. They must act freely and with pure intention, after being instructed in the Catholic religion. They must believe in God and Jesus Christ, and hope for mercy, relying on Christ's merits. They must love God and their neighbor, and repent truly of their sins. At baptism they promise solemnly to believe in Jesus Christ, to obey His precepts and to avoid all sin and error.

We too ought frequently to call to mind the grace given us at baptism, and to renew our promises, and we should do well to examine ourselves from time to time, and see how far we have been true to them. After each such examination we should seriously resolve to lead a really Christian life as members of Christ and temples of the Holy Ghost. A renewal of our baptismal vows may with advantage be made at definite seasons, for instance, at New Year's, on our birthday, after receiving Holy Communion, and at Easter and Pentecost.

My brethren, let us thank God for allowing us to receive Holy Baptism, since it is indispensable to salvation. It behooves us to do

our utmost to extend this great benefit to all mankind, and to meditate upon our baptismal vows, and try to be faithful to them, resolving to be Christians not only in name but in deed and in truth. Amen.

9. The Administration of Holy Baptism

The administration of Holy Baptism is accompanied by various ceremonies. The name of some saint is given to the child, (a) in token of his being enrolled among the members of Christ's Church, whom St. Paul calls saints, (b) in order that he may have a patron saint to pray for him, and (c) that this saint may be his model throughout life.

The priest asks the god-parents what they desire, and they answer, in the name of the child, "The Catholic faith," or else "Holy Baptism." This is done to show that no one is baptized against his will.

The priest asks further what benefit faith bestows, and the god-parent answers: "Eternal life." The priest continues: "If thou wilt enter into eternal life, keep the commandments. Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, with thy whole soul, and with thy whole mind, and thy neighbor as thyself." Thus the person to be baptized is reminded briefly of the law of Christ; only these two commandments are mentioned, because they comprise all the rest.

The priest then breathes on the child, in token that divine grace, which is the supernatural life of the soul, is imparted to him by baptism, just as God breathed an immortal soul into Adam, and Jesus by His breath conferred the Holy Ghost on His apostles. The priest next calls upon the impure spirit to depart and give

place to the Holy Ghost. He marks the child's brow and breast with the sign of the Cross, to signify that the new Christian must ever retain the teaching of Christ in his heart, and confess it boldly before all the world, glorying, as St. Paul says, in the Cross of Christ. A little salt is put into the child's mouth, to signify that heavenly wisdom, the salt of life, will preserve him from the corruption of sin, so that his delight may be in God and holy things, not in the wickedness of the world, and that his speech may be worthy of a Christian, and savor of modesty.

After this the priest lays the end of his stole upon the person to be baptized, and admits him into the church, saying: "N, enter into the temple of God, that thou mayest have part with Christ unto life everlasting." The Apostles' Creed and the Our Father are repeated by the priest and the sponsors to show that a person, though baptized, cannot be a Christian unless he have in his heart faith, hope and charity, which must prevail over all his evil passions. Then the priest asks: "N, dost thou renounce Satan?—and all his works?—and all his pomps?" and the sponsor answers each question in the affirmative. Whoever intends to be a Christian, must first solemnly promise to forsake the world, the flesh and the devil, and to abhor them as the most dangerous enemies of his soul.

The priest next moistens his fingers with spittle and touches the child's ears and nose, saying: "Be thou opened, for a savor of sweetness. But do thou, Satan, begone." He is here following our Lord's example, who cured a deaf and dumb man by touching him with spittle. The ceremony signifies that the child is to open his ears to the divine teaching of Christ, and his mouth to proclaim the praises of God, whilst he offers his body as a living sacrifice well pleasing in God's sight. The child is then anointed with holy oil in the form of a cross on his breast and between his shoulders, whilst

the priest says: "N, I anoint thee with the oil of salvation in Christ Jesus, our Lord." St. Ambrose and St. John Chrysostom tell us that this is done in order to make the child a valiant soldier of Christ, for in ancient times soldiers and athletes used to be rubbed with oil before the combat.

The priest proceeds to question the person to be baptized, saying: "N, dost thou believe in God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth?"—"Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was born into this world and suffered for us?" —"Dost thou believe in the Holy Ghost, the Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of Saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and life everlasting?" The sponsors answer each question in the affirmative. The Church desires no one to become a Christian in name only or under compulsion, and therefore she requires a public and definite profession of faith. By asking these questions she shows that no one, though baptized, can be saved, unless he believe and do all that a Catholic Christian is required to believe and do, as soon as he is able to act for himself.

The priest then asks: "N, wilt thou be baptized?" and the sponsor answers: "I will." This question is asked because the Church will not constrain any one against his will to enter her fold. The actual baptism follows at this point. The priest pours water thrice over the child's head, saying at the same time: "N, I baptize thee in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." If the child has already been privately baptized, because he seemed likely to die, the priest administers baptism conditionally, saying: "Unless thou art already baptized, I baptize thee," etc. After this he anoints the child with chrism on the top of the head, praying God to anoint him with abundant graces.

Then he lays a white cloth over him, praying that the child may appear wearing the white robe of innocence unstained before the judgment seat of Christ. He then gives a lighted candle to the person baptized, or to the sponsor, saying: "Receive this burning light, and keep thy baptism blameless; observe the commandments of God, that when the Lord shall come to the nuptials, thou mayest meet Him, together with all the Saints, in the heavenly court, and have everlasting life." The lighted taper represents the doctrines of Christianity and the good works of a Christian. You see, my brethren, how many beautiful ceremonies belong to the administration of baptism; every one of them has a meaning, and they show what importance the Church attaches to this Sacrament. Whenever you are present at a baptism, remember what it all means. and try to live in accordance with your baptismal vow. Amen.

10. Confirmation

Although a baptized person received sanctifying grace, he is not delivered from concupiscence, which urges him to do wrong. If he is to be faithful to the covenant with God, made at his Baptism, and to acknowledge his Lord and Saviour both in word and deed, he still needs strength and courage. From the earliest times it has been a universal practice in the Church that the bishops should lay their hands upon the baptized, in order thus to impart to them strength to confess Christ, to adhere to His doctrine and to resist temptations against faith. This ceremony is known as Confirmation; the precise occasion of its institution cannot be ascertained, but in all probability our Lord Himself between the Resurrection and the Ascension instructed the Apostles regarding its use. Confirmation is not merely an ecclesiastical ceremony at which the young are examined in their knowledge of our holy religion, and invited to renew their baptismal vows. The Apostles administered Confirmation to adults who had been instructed in the doctrines of Christianity and baptized. It is a true Sacrament, because the laying on of hands is an outward sign of inward grace, by which grace is given to our souls. We read in the Acts (viii, 14-17): "When the Apostles, who were in Jerusalem, had heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John. Who when they were come, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost; for He was not as yet come upon any of them, but they were only baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid their hands upon them, and they received the Holy Ghost." Thus the Apostles laid their hands upon baptized converts, so that they might receive the Holy Ghost. There is, therefore, in Confirmation

an outward sign, imparting the divine grace that God has promised to the faithful. It is a true Sacrament, quite distinct from Baptism. Pope Melchiades says: "In Baptism the Holy Ghost bestows the fulness of grace upon innocence, in Confirmation He gives perfection to grace. In Baptism we are born anew to life, and after Baptism we are strengthened for conflict. Regeneration renders those who are baptized happy in peace; Confirmation arms and equips them for warfare."

Christians perfected by Confirmation are not merely heirs of the kingdom of heaven, but active workers in propagating the faith, fearless living witnesses to Christ's resurrection and teaching. The Holy Ghost produces within them the fruits of holy love, joy in spiritual things, inward peace, patience, fortitude, benignity, goodness, mildness, modesty and purity. The Apostles and early Christians brought forth these fruits in great abundance. They were full of grace and of the Holy Spirit, and nothing could resist the spirit that filled these heroes of faith. They faced danger with exultation, and rejoiced at suffering for the name of Jesus. Like St. Andrew they welcomed the Cross from afar, endured torture steadfastly, and sealed their testimony with their blood. This supernatural strength and courage was especially remarkable in the primitive Church, but it has never failed in times of persecution, and it is chiefly the effect of Confirmation, or, which is the same thing, the result of the personal action of the Holy Ghost. Hence whenever persecution was impending, the Church has insisted more than ever on the absolute necessity of Confirmation.—Let us thank God, my brethren, for bestowing this Sacrament upon us. It supplies us, as it were, with a coat of mail, enabling us to enter fearlessly upon our warfare with the world, the flesh and the devil. If we wear this armor, we cannot be overcome by our enemies. Since it affords

such effectual protection, let us do our best to see that every Christian is provided with it. Amen.

11. The Necessity of Confirmation

Our divine Lord instituted Confirmation for the good of His Church and of all the faithful, and it is undoubtedly a duty to receive it, for no one can reject so precious a gift without committing sin. Our Lord intended, when opening this channel of grace, to unite the faithful still more closely with Himself, to strengthen them for the battle of life, to consecrate them and advance them on the way to His kingdom. Who would refuse an invitation offering so many advantages? In Confirmation we receive grace to profess Christianity for the edification of the faithful, to commend it to others, to defend it against all opponents and to sacrifice our possessions and, if need be, life itself for the truth.

Confirmation is not indispensable to salvation, nor is it the only door admitting us to heaven, because in its aim and constitution it differs completely from Baptism, which is indispensable. Yet no one who desires closer union with Christ can neglect to avail himself of the benefits of Confirmation, and as soon as we reach the age of reason, and grow in faith, hope and charity, it becomes our duty to do all that we can for the good of our souls. The obligation to accept a gift recurs whenever God offers it. Now God teaches us quite plainly that we ought to confess Him before men, bear testimony to our Lord's resurrection and gospel, and cooperate in extending His kingdom, by showing others how worthy Christianity is of their love and respect. Indifference to and neglect of Confirmation must be a serious offence, since this Sacrament assists us so greatly in doing what God requires of us.

In Confirmation a Christian undertakes to confess Christ openly

in word and deed; he is consecrated as a soldier ready to fight for the faith, and he is called to bear witness to the gospel. The religion of Jesus Christ is eternally true and divine, hence a Christian is always bound to defend and propagate it, and in the Sacrament of Confirmation he receives for this purpose a special grace from the Holy Ghost. He is marked indelibly as a perfect Christian, possessing baptismal grace in all its fulness, for those who have only been baptized are still, like new-born children, weak, and it is not until they are confirmed, that they receive strength to withstand the assaults of the world, the flesh and the devil; and are rendered strong in the faith and able to confess and glorify the name of Jesus Christ. This particular grace imprints a character or mark upon the soul, distinguishing it from that of an unconfirmed person. This character is permanent and indelible, and therefore Confirmation cannot be repeated. The Apostles received the Holy Ghost once, but the grace of this single reception lasted until the hour, when they, strengthened by the Holy Ghost, laid down their lives, and died as martyrs for Christ.

Confirmation is not administered to children who have not reached the age of reason, since no one, who is ignorant of our Lord's teaching, can come forward to fight in its defence; hence candidates for Confirmation should be well instructed in religion. The Apostles did not receive the Holy Ghost until their divine Master had instructed them for three years; and the early Christians were always carefully taught, before the Apostles laid their hands upon them. Moreover, Confirmation is a Sacrament of the living, and whoever is confirmed, must be in the state of grace, and if he has sinned, he must have recourse, before he is confirmed, to the Sacrament of Penance, and, like the Apostles, prepare to receive Confirmation as worthily as possible. He must put aside all distractions, devote

himself to prayer and to reviewing his religious instruction, and strive to render his heart a dwelling fit for the Holy Ghost, and adorned with virtues.

In order to participate fully in the gifts of the Holy Ghost, he should hear Mass on the day of his Confirmation, and try to awaken within himself sentiments of humility, confidence in God, charity and self-sacrifice.

Having now considered the necessity of Confirmation, let us resolve never to forget the obligations that it has laid upon us. Every soldier enrolled in the army is bound to be brave and loyal, until he gets his discharge. At our Confirmation we were enrolled as soldiers of Christ, and it behooves us to fight zealously under His banner, and to be His faithful adherents until death. If we do this, we shall deserve a great reward, viz., the palm of victory in heaven. Amen.

12. The Ceremonial of Confirmation

The first mention of Confirmation is in Acts, viii, where we read how Peter and John laid their hands upon the newly-baptized converts in Samaria. In the administration of this Sacrament in our days the bishop wears the mitre on his head and holds a pastoral staff in his hand, to show that he is about to discharge the functions of a bishop, or apostle. After kneeling before the altar to invoke the Holy Ghost, he arises and faces the persons to be confirmed, who kneel whilst he prays over them, makes the sign of the cross and stretches out his hands towards them. Then he approaches the candidates, and whilst the sponsor lays his right hand on the candidate's right shoulder, the bishop lays his hand on the head of the person to be confirmed. This was the way in which the Apostles administered Confirmation. The bishop then dips his thumb into a vessel containing chrism, and makes the sign of the cross on the

forehead of the person whom he is confirming, and says: "N., I sign thee with the sign of the cross and I confirm thee with the crism of salvation. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost." He then strikes him gently on the cheek, saying: "Peace be with thee." When all candidates have been confirmed, the bishop turns again to the altar, and recites certain prayers. The stretching out and the laying on of his hands indicates that the Holy Ghost comes down upon the person confirmed, and takes him under His peculiar protection. Anointing with chrism is a type of the inward anointing of the soul with the Holy Ghost. Chrism is made of olive oil and balm; just as oil strengthens the body, so does the grace of the Holy Ghost strengthen the soul; and balm symbolizes grace, which gives forth the fragrance of virtue. The cross traced on the brow with chrism denotes that a Christian must not be ashamed of the Cross of Christ, and must take up his own cross and bear it after his Master. The gentle blow on the cheek teaches him that no ill treatment or affliction should ever cause him to abandon the faith, but that he must always be ready to bear persecution and shame with patience and steadfastness. The sponsor by laying his right hand on the shoulder of the person being confirmed, signifies his willingness to accept the spiritual responsibilities of a parent towards him, in case of necessity. After receiving the Sacrament, the newly-confirmed spend some time in silent prayer, adoring God the Holy Ghost with humility, thanking Him and promising to fulfil loyally the obligations incurred at Confirmation. They beseech Him never to let them forget their good resolutions, and they ask His help for their parents and teachers, and for the bishop who has just confirmed them. Finally they pray for the Catholic Church, and for the conversion of sinners.

Sponsors at Confirmation incur the same obligations as those at

Baptism. Should the parents of their godchildren die, sponsors must take care to provide for their Christian education, and set them a good example.

Moreover, the sponsors enter into a spiritual relationship with the newly-confirmed persons and their parents, so that no marriage is possible between them. Parents may not stand as sponsors to their own children, nor the brothers and sisters of candidates, nor may the godparents at Baptism be sponsors again at Confirmation.

Whenever you are present at the administration of Confirmation, my brethren, pray that all who are confirmed may throughout life be zealous Christians, doing their best to promote the salvation of themselves and of others. Amen.

13. The Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar

The chief one of all the means of grace instituted by Christ is the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, which is so called because it is offered on the altar. It is also called the Last Supper, because our Lord instituted it on the evening preceding His death. This great Sacrament differs from all the rest, inasmuch as in the other Sacraments we receive grace, but in this we receive Jesus Christ, the Author of all grace, with His Body and Soul, His flesh and blood, His divinity and humanity, under the form of bread and wine. Hence this is the greatest of all the Sacraments. St. Paul gives us the following account of its institution: "I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus, the same night in which he was betrayed, took bread, and giving thanks, broke and said: 'Take you and eat; this is my body which shall be delivered for you; this do for the commemoration of me.' In like manner also the chalice, . . . saying: 'This chalice is the new testament in my blood; this do ye, as often as you shall drink, for the

commemoration of me. For as often as you shall eat this bread and drink the chalice, you shall show the death of the Lord, until he come,'" (1 Cor., xi, 23-26). Christ gave the Apostles His Body and Blood, under the forms of bread and wine, to be the nourishment of their souls; therefore bread and wine are the outward signs of this Sacrament.

Since Christ gave the Apostles what was truly His Body and Blood, we must believe that He is truly present with His Body and Soul in the Sacrament of the Altar. He said: "Take ye and eat; this is my body . . . drink ye all of this chalice, for this is my blood" (Matt., xxvi, 26-28). Bread and wine are not, however, signs of the Body and Blood of Christ; neither nature nor any arbitrary ordinance has made them such. Nor did Christ teach his Apostles to regard bread and wine as signs of His Body and Blood, but they had to understand His words literally, and he had already on a previous occasion promised to give them His flesh to eat and His blood to drink (John, vi). After miraculously feeding a great multitude, He spoke to them very opportunely of the true bread from heaven, which should surpass even the manna, so highly esteemed by the Jews, and which should bestow on them life everlasting. He said then: "I am the living bread, which came down from heaven. . . . The bread that I will give is my flesh for the life of the world." His hearers understood these words literally, for they murmured and asked: "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?" If they had been wrong in giving the words a literal interpretation, Jesus, who came to teach men truth, would necessarily have corrected their mistake by explaining His real meaning. But He did nothing of the kind, and only corroborated His former statement, adding: "Amen, amen, I say unto you: Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you shall not have life in you." Al-

hough He knew that the Jews objected to His words, He said em-
phatically: "My flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed."
Therefore, as He had plainly taught His disciples that He intended
to give them His body to eat, we must understand His words at the
Last Supper as referring to His real body. The Catholic Church
has always interpreted them in this sense, and believed that Christ
is truly present in the Sacrament of the Altar, and that, although
we cannot perceive Him with our senses, He Himself comes to us
under the form of bread and wine. Further, as He is present in
the Sacrament, it follows that the bread and wine cease to exist
there. Our senses might indeed lead us to think the bread and wine
to be still present, but in fact only the appearances of bread and
wine remain. We believe in the real presence of Jesus Christ, be-
cause He has taught us to do so, and it is to Christ, and not to the
bread, that the impressions which we receive are due.

Our Lord instituted this most blessed Sacrament for three great
ends. (1) As a commemoration of His Passion and Death; He
said: "Do this for a commemoration of me," and St. Paul writes
to the Corinthians: "As often as you shall eat this bread . . . you
shall shew the death of the Lord." His death is represented in
Holy Mass and at Holy Communion, and whenever we enter a
Church, we should remember that our Lord is present. St. Bernard
says: "In the Sacrament of the Altar consider the Saviour of the
world, who suffered for thee, the life that was given for thee, and
the Almighty power that became weakness for my sake." (2) The
Blessed Sacrament was intended by our Lord to promote charity.
In it we adore and offer up Him who spoke of charity towards our
neighbor as the great commandment, who loved all men and died
for their sake, who loved peace and rejected every sacrifice made
by those at enmity with their fellowmen, and who looks upon all

works of mercy as done to Himself. Holy Communion impresses upon us the duty of charity, since we are all equal when we approach the altar; we all receive the same food and act as members of the same body.

(3) Christ instituted this most holy Sacrament to unite us all with Himself. At the last supper He concluded a covenant sealed with the blood that He shed visibly on the cross, and mystically when He handed the chalice to the apostles. This covenant was one of friendship, and He desires to dwell continually with us in the Blessed Sacrament, to offer Himself at Holy Mass, to come to us in Holy Communion, to abide with us poor sinners, even with the poorest and most unworthy, and finally to give us life everlasting. His flesh and blood are a pledge to us of these benefits, and though we can never comprehend the glorious Sacrament of the Altar, we can have faith, and believe that Jesus Christ is really present in it. Consequently we ought to pay Him the deepest reverence, and pray to Him present in this most holy Sacrament. We owe Him infinite gratitude for having instituted it to remind us of all that He has done for us. The thought that Jesus is ever in our midst, giving us priceless graces and benefits, should fill us with joy, so that we may always be ready to exclaim: "Blessed and praised for evermore be the most holy Sacrament of the Altar." Amen.

14. The Sacrifice of the Mass

When He instituted the Blessed Sacrament of the Altar, our Lord intended it to continue forever in His Church. Hence He did not simply Himself change bread and wine into His Flesh and Blood, but He commissioned and empowered the Apostles to do the same. "This do for a commemoration of me." The Apostles transmitted to their successors and to all priests the power to change bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ, and at every celebration of Mass this power is exercised.

Holy Mass is a true sacrifice, the only sacrifice of the new dispensation. In writing to the Hebrews, St. Paul says that, the Levitical priesthood being imperfect, another priest was called, according not to the order of Aaron, but to that of Melchisech; and a change being thus effected in the priesthood, it was necessary that a change should be made also in the law. The sacrifices of the Old Testament, which he calls "weak and needy elements" (Gal., iv, 9), were replaced by the sacrifice offered by Christ on the Cross. The ancient sacrifices had in themselves no efficacy except what they derived from the faith of those who offered them, and they were pleasing to God only as types of the one perfect sacrifice, that they foreshadowed. Holy Mass is a true sacrifice because there is a visible offering of bread and wine, which, through the words of consecration spoken by the priest, are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ, and presented to God.

Holy Mass is the same sacrifice as Christ offered on the Cross. Heretics maintain that, the merits of Christ's death being infinite, there is no need of further sacrifices in the Church. We cannot sup-

pose that Jesus, who had united His followers so closely to Himself would leave them without providing them with the means of offering a sacrifice that should express their reverence, gratitude and worship, and at the same time preserve the intimate connection between Him and themselves. He ordered us to continue to do on our altars what He did at the last supper and on the Cross. The Sacrifice of the Altar is not essentially different from that of the Cross but it is not offered in the same way. The altar represents the cross, and on both Jesus Christ is the victim, but what took place on the Cross is renewed on the altar, though no blood is shed, for Christ, having died once, dieth no more. His death is, however indicated by the separation of the flesh and blood. The blood shed on the Cross made indeed adequate satisfaction for all sin, yet the merits of this death must be applied to and appropriated by men individually. On the Cross the inexhaustible treasure of Christ's merits was as it were gathered together; on the altar it is distributed. On the Cross Jesus offered Himself for all men; on the altar He is offered for all the faithful, both living and dead. Hence the Catholic Church possesses a holy sacrifice, worthy of the majesty of the Most High, that is to be offered in every age all over the world, that comprises every form of worship which man can give to God, and that contains the exultant thanksgivings of the Church triumphant, as well as the prayers of the Church militant and suffering. The dignity of this sacrifice far surpasses our comprehension, and its permanence is best described in the Apostle's words "Ye shall show forth the Lord's death till He come." Holy Mass is the climax of our public worship. This unbloody, mysterious sacrifice will be offered up wherever the Catholic faith is known, and it will never be changed. Wherever Jesus Christ is worshiped as God and man, grateful souls will come together to adore Him, and

there is no hour of the day or night when the sacrifice is not being offered somewhere in the world:

The Sacrifice of the Mass is a sacrifice of reconciliation. In giving us the Mass, our Lord intended it to be a perpetual means of reconciling men with God, whom they offend daily by their sins, and of satisfying His justice. He could not have left us a better proof of His boundless love, for the efficacy of the Sacrifice of the Altar is that of the Cross itself, and just as Christ's death brought about our reconciliation with God, so does the Sacrifice of the Mass tend to assuage God's wrath. In some of the prayers at Mass the Church asks for forgiveness of the sins of the world, whenever this sacrifice is offered. It is foolish to urge that we have at our disposal other means of obtaining remission of our sins; they are worthy of all respect, but they do not render the Sacrifice of the Mass superfluous, since it is the great sacrifice of reconciliation, whence all other sources of forgiveness derive their efficacy.

15. The Nature and Benefits of the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass

The Mass is offered as a solemn act of worship to Almighty God. Among the various sacrifices of the old law, the holocaust was intended to give God peculiar honor, and the victim was consequently burnt and reduced to ashes. This signified that man was nothing in comparison with God's majesty. Holy Mass is preëminently a sacrifice made in God's honor, far greater than any holocaust. The loftier the dignity of the victim and of him who offers it, the more honor is paid to God. Now in Holy Mass Jesus Christ is Himself the victim and priest; as God He came down from the throne of His majesty and humbled Himself so far as to put on the form of a

servant and become obedient unto death. The sacrifice that He offered once upon the Cross, He renews daily in our churches, in this way making it perpetual. Hence the honor paid to God in Holy Mass is far greater than that which was formerly paid Him in the holocausts, and the sacrifice of the new dispensation is far superior in dignity to that of the old law.

The Mass is an impetratory sacrifice. The Church has always believed that our Divine Redeemer, in instituting the Sacrifice of the Mass intended it to be a means whereby we should receive from God all the graces requisite to our soul's salvation. Our Lord said once to His disciples: "Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you." We could not possibly find a better opportunity for asking God anything in our Saviour's name than the moment when we offer Him the merits, purchased on the Cross, of His beloved Son. We may confidently hope that our requests will be granted, because Jesus Himself is praying for us, and is, according to the fathers, the unseen priest offering up the sacrifice. The efficacy of the holy Sacrifice is so great that not only the priest saying Mass may obtain what he asks for himself, but also for all who are present, or who unite themselves in spirit with him, or for whom he especially prays. Even the souls in purgatory participate in the benefits of Holy Mass, and the Church has always offered the holy Sacrifice for the departed.

Finally, *the Sacrifice of the Mass is a thank-offering.* It is obvious that we cannot reckon up the benefits which we receive daily at God's hand, and if our gratitude is to be at all in proportion to their number and magnitude, we cannot display it more worthily than in the Sacrifice of the Mass. St. John Chrysostom says that God permitted sacrifices in order to move men to thankfulness. The Jews, who received many temporal favors from God, were in the habit of

making thank-offerings. We receive far more precious gifts, and therefore our thank-offerings ought to be infinitely better than theirs, and so we Christians under the new dispensation discharge our duty of thankfulness toward God by means of the same sacrifice, in which we entreat Him to show us His mercy.

The holy Sacrifice is always offered in an assembly of Christians, and it behooves each to reveal by his outward demeanor his sense of the awful majesty of the sacrifice at which he is assisting. The attitude of his body and the expression of his face should testify to his inward devotion and tend to edify others and stimulate their ardor. We should most carefully refrain from any disrespectful action, which might be a cause of distraction or scandal to others. The congregation ought to be most closely united with the priest who offers the holy Sacrifice, so that they may pray with one accord. In this way we are certain to realize the blessing of this union, which cannot fail to fill our hearts with joy. Amen.

16. The Ceremonies at Holy Mass

We have hitherto considered the meaning of the Holy Sacrifice; let us to-day turn our attention to the various ceremonies belonging to it, and their signification.

1. The priest goes to the altar attended by a server, who represents the congregation and who on their behalf answers the priest at Mass. Here we may remember Christ entering the Garden of Gethsemani with His disciples.

2. Bending down, the priest says the *Confiteor,* the public confession of sin, and strikes his breast thrice in token of his consciousness of guilt. He calls upon our Lady and all the saints, and also upon the congregation to intercede for him. The server does the same on behalf of the congregation. Humble confession of sin is the

proper beginning of public worship. Here we may remember Christ's prayer and agony on the Mount of Olives.

3. After this humble confession the priest ascends the altar steps where he renews his prayer for forgiveness.

4. He goes to the epistle side to read the *Introit,* the introduction to the Mass. Remember how Christ was betrayed and arrested.

5. After the Introit the priest and the server say alternately *Kyrie eleison, Christe eleison,* these words being a prayer for mercy.

6. Contrition for sin and requests for mercy are followed by the *Gloria in excelsis,* a song of praise, thanksgiving and exultation. Remember how Christ was brought before Caiphas and Annas, denied by Peter and mocked by the Jews.

7. After the Gloria the priest turns to the people and says: *Dominus vobiscum* (the Lord be with you), and the server answers: *Et cum spiritu tuo* (and with thy spirit). This greeting is repeated several times during Mass, and signifies that priest and people are of one heart and one soul. Remember how Christ looked at Peter and thus moved him to repentance.

8. The priest reads one or more collects, each of which ends with the words: *Per Jesum Christum,* etc., because Christ is the Mediator between God and man, and only through His merits we can hope that our petitions will be granted.

9. After the collects the priest reads the epistle, or a portion of Scripture appointed to take its place, and at the end the server says *Deo gratias.* We should join in giving thanks for the glorious doctrines that God has revealed to us through the prophets and apostles. Remember how Christ was falsely accused before Pilate.

10. After the epistle the priest, standing at the middle of the altar prays God to purify his heart and lips that he may be worthy to proclaim the Gospel.

11. Then, standing at the left-hand side of the altar, he reads the Gospel, after which the server says: *Laus tibi, Christe,* Praise be to thee, O Christ. Remember how Christ was mocked by Herod.

12. The *Credo,* or profession of faith, follows the Gospel. Remember how Christ was brought before Pilate for the second time, and Barabbas, a murderer, was preferred to him.

13. The priest uncovers the chalice, and offers first the bread and then the wine. Remember how Christ was stripped of His garments and cruelly scourged.

14. The priest covers the chalice. Remember how Christ was crowned with thorns.

15. The priest washes his hands to show that the heart needs purification if it is to please God. Pilate declared Christ to be innocent and washed his hands.

16. The priest turns to the people and says: *Orate, fratres,* "pray, my brethren, that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God the Father Almighty," and the server answers on behalf of those present: "May the Lord receive the sacrifice from thy hands, to the praise and glory of His name, to our benefit, and to that of all His Holy Church." Remember how Pilate presented Christ to the Jews.

17. The priest reads the preface, praising and glorifying God, and heaven and earth unite in extolling the one true God through Jesus Christ. Remember how Christ, though innocent, was condemned to death.

18. The Canon of the Mass begins at this point. The word *canon* means rule, and it contains an unvarying rule for the celebration of the great mystery of the altar. The priest prays in the spirit of Jesus Christ, beseeching God to accept and bless the sacrifice offered for the Catholic Church, the Pope, the Bishop and all orthodox be-

lievers. Then he prays particularly for those in whom he is interested, or for whom he is saying Mass. This prayer is called the commemoration of the living. His thoughts rise to the Church triumphant in heaven, and he mentions our Lady, the Apostles and martyrs, praying that he and his people may be numbered amongst God's elect. Remember how Christ carried His Cross to Calvary.

19. The priest now proceeds with the most sacred part of the Mass, recalling the institution of the Sacrament, and reads the Consecration, at which the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Christ. Both before and after showing the consecrated host and chalice to the people, he adores it, bending the knee in token of his profound reverence. The people kneel humbly, strike their breasts and pray, for now Jesus Himself is present on the altar under the form of bread and wine. Remember how Christ was lifted up on the Cross and shown to the people; and how He shed His Blood.

20. The priest continues to pray, recalling the Resurrection and Ascension of our Lord.

21. Next follows the Commemoration of the dead.

22. Then the priest prays again for himself and for all men, that God may cleanse them from their sins and admit them to the company of the saints. At the words *Nobis quoque peccatoribus* the priest strikes his breast, again acknowledging himself to be a sinner.

23. He takes the consecrated host, and with it makes the Sign of the Cross three times over the chalice,

24. and says the *Pater noster,* adding to it a petition that God will deliver us from all evils, past, present and future. Remember the seven words uttered by Christ on the Cross.

25. The priest, following our Lord's example, breaks the consecrated host, and with one half of it he makes the Sign of the Cross

three times over the chalice, saying: *Pax Domini sit semper vobiscum.* May the peace of the Lord be always with you. He then puts this half of the Host into the chalice and says: "May this mixture and consecration of the Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus Christ be, to us that receive it, effectual to eternal life." Remember Christ dying upon the Cross.

26. The priest strikes his breast three times as he says the *Agnus Dei.* Remember how Christ's side was pierced with a lance.

27. Three prayers are said in preparation for Communion, then the priest, after making a genuflexion, says: "I will take the bread of Heaven, and call upon the name of the Lord." He takes the consecrated host in his left hand, strikes his breast thrice with the right hand, saying each time: "Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." He then makes the Sign of the Cross, holding the Host in his right hand, and says: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve my soul to life everlasting, Amen," and consumes the Sacred Host. Remember how Christ was laid in the grave.

28. After a moment spent in thanksgiving he drinks out of the chalice.

29. A few prayers follow, and then Mass is over. Remember how Christ rose from the dead, blessed His followers, and remained with them for forty days.

30. The priest blesses the people and reads the last Gospel. At the words: "The Word was made flesh" all kneel in adoration of the Incarnate Son of God. Remember how Christ blessed His disciples and ascended into Heaven in their sight.

Several of the prayers at Mass and the frequent use of the Sign of the Cross ought to remind us that the Holy Sacrifice represents the bloody sacrifice of the Cross on Calvary.

My Brethren, if we had done nothing hitherto except study the ceremonies of the Mass, I think that they alone would be enough to inspire us with reverence for the Holy Sacrifice. You see how full of meaning they are, and if you are familiar with them, you will need no book of prayers, for every word and action on the part of the priest has a deep significance. Take pains to recall it and meditate upon it whenever you hear Mass, and in this way you will benefit greatly and fulfil our Lord's intention. Amen.

17. The Vestments Worn by the Priest at Mass

The official vestments worn by the priest at Mass are no less important than the ceremonies attending it, for they confer upon the wearer a special dignity befitting his high functions. Among the Jews the priests and Levites had an official garment, and though in the primitive Church it was impossible for the priests to wear any distinctive dress, it was not long before one was adopted. At the present time the vestments prescribed to be worn are the humeral, or amice, the alb, the girdle, the maniple, the stole and the chasuble.

1. The *humeral* or *amice* is worn round the neck and shoulders, and is intended to remind the priest (a) of the Son of God, who came down from Heaven and veiled His divinity under our human nature; (b) of the warfare to be carried on against the spirits of evil; hence, as he puts on the amice, the priest says: "O Lord, place on my head the helmet of salvation to guard me against the assaults of the evil one"; (c) of the cloth with which the soldiers covered our Saviour's face when mocking Him.

2. The *alb*, a long white linen garment, by its whiteness reminds the priest of inward purity, and by its length of perseverance in good works. It suggests also the white robes which, as St. John tells us, are worn by Christ's faithful servants in Heaven. As he

puts it on, the priest says: "Purify me, O Lord, and cleanse my heart that, being washed in the Blood of the Lamb, I may enjoy eternal happiness." Finally, the alb reminds him of the white robe which Herod in mockery forced our Lord to wear.

3. The *girdle* keeps the alb in place and reminds the priest to avoid, during the Holy Sacrifice, every thought of the world and the flesh. Here he prays: "Gird me, O Lord, with the girdle of purity, and take away all unholy desires from me." The girdle symbolizes also the cords with which the soldiers bound our Lord when they arrested Him.

4. The *maniple,* worn on the left arm, was originally a white linen cloth serving as a handkerchief. It reminds the priest that he must labor incessantly with pain and sorrow in order to enter Heaven. As he puts it on, he says: "Make me worthy, O Lord, to endure the bondage of pain and grief that I may reap with joy the harvest of my labors. The maniple represents also the cloth with which our Saviour wiped His face when it was stained with blood and sweat.

5. The *stole* was originally a long upper garment, with a border of a different color. As the alb now forms a complete covering, the stole is only a badge of the priest's dignity and power, and reminds him of the spiritual robe of innocence and justice, lost through Adam's fall, and restored through the death of Christ. As he puts it on, he prays: "Give back to me, O Lord, the robe of immortality that I lost through the sin of my first father." The stole represents also the chains borne by Christ in order to deliver us from the bondage of sin.

6. The *chasuble, casula* or *planeta* was formerly a round cloak with an opening for the head, but no openings at the side. It reminds the priest of holy charity, in which, following his Master's

example, he should include all men and shelter them, as it were, under a cloak; also it should suggest the yoke of Christ, i. e., the religion according to which he ought to live. As he puts on the chasuble, he says: "O Lord, who hast said: 'My yoke is easy, and my burden is light,' grant that I may have strength to bear it so as to obtain Thy grace." Moreover, the chasuble symbolizes the cross that each of us is required to bear by mortifying the flesh.

7. The *biretta,* a cap with three or four corners, reminds the priest of the spirit of recollection in which he ought to offer the Holy Sacrifice, and of Christ's crown of thorns.

The chasuble in its original form gave rise also to the *pluviale,* worn during processions as a protection against bad weather, but now it has become the *cope,* worn at vespers, solemn processions, etc.

At High Mass the deacon and sub-deacon wear *dalmatics,* garments resembling a chasuble in shape, but with wide sleeves. They add to the solemnity of the Mass and express the joy felt by Christians during the Holy Sacrifice, as the Bishop declares, when he ordains deacons and sub-deacons and puts a dalmatic on them for the first time.

Various meanings have been suggested for the peculiar shape of these vestments. The wide sleeves were supposed to represent the gentleness and generosity with which those ministering at the altar should treat the poor; because in the apostolic age the chief duty of a deacon was to distribute alms.

When a bishop officiates, he wears additional garments and marks of distinction, namely:

1. *Sandals* or shoes, symbolize the preaching office held by the bishop as a successor of the Apostles. St. Paul says: "Have your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace" (Ephes., vi, 15).

2. The *pectoral cross,* worn on the breast, indicates on the one hand Christ's love and His desire to die for us on the Cross, and on the other hand the bishop's love for his crucified Redeemer.

3. Under the chasuble a bishop wears also the tunic and dalmatic, to signify that he possesses authority over both priests and servers.

4. The *mitre* represents the dignity and majesty conferred by God upon our divine Redeemer, and also the position occupied by the bishop as Christ's representative.

5. The *pastoral staff* indicates Christ's supremacy in heaven and on earth, and also the pastoral office held and exercised by the bishop in the name of Jesus Christ.

6. The *gloves* suggest the beneficent power of our Lord's hands, and also the blessing that the bishop gives to the faithful.

7. The *episcopal ring* recalls Christ's love and loyalty to His beloved Bride, the Holy Catholic Church, and also the love and loyalty of the bishop towards the same Church, and his desire to fill the people entrusted to his charge with similar sentiments.

The color of the vestments varies—*White* is used in token of joy and gratitude on festivals of our Lord, our Lady, and of all confessors. It reminds us of their purity and innocence. *Red* is used at Pentecost and on the feasts of martyrs, and reminds us of the burning love with which the Holy Ghost can inflame the hearts of men. *Purple* is used in Advent and Lent, and reminds us of the necessity of penance. *Green* is used on days on which there is no particular festival; it reminds us of the hope of salvation, obtained for us by Christ; and *black* is used in token of mourning at Masses for the dead. You see how full of beautiful significance all these things are. Whenever we look at a priest vested for Mass we are reminded of Christ and His doctrines. Thomas à Kempis says: "When a priest celebrates, he honors God, he rejoices the

angels, he edifies the Church, he helps the living, he obtains rest for the dead" (Imit., iv, 5). The sight of him should inspire us with deep respect and great confidence, because he then appears in his official capacity. Amen.

18. The Effects of Holy Communion

Holy Communion is the greatest of all the Sacraments, because in it we adore Jesus Christ present in His Divinity and humanity, and, in union with the priest, we offer to God the supreme sacrifice of the new dispensation. But it is more than this, inasmuch as in it we receive life-giving nourishment for our soul. Our Lord said: "If any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever" (John, vi, 52). Without this Divine Food our soul cannot receive spiritual life, since in the Holy Sacrament of the Altar, Jesus Christ under the forms of bread and wine Himself becomes its nourishment.

The priest who says Mass communicates under both kinds, but others receive only the consecrated Host, but this suffices, since our Lord is present under either form, and we receive His Body and Blood under the form of bread. We have our Lord's authority for receiving in one kind only, for He said: "He that eateth this bread shall live forever," and: "He that eateth me, the same also shall live by me" (John, vi, 59, 58). Holy Communion, whether in one or both kinds, is the most precious food of our souls, provided that we receive it worthily, in which case it produces the following results:

1. It sanctifies us, for we receive God, who is holy, and we are assimilated to Him. His purity and sanctity are imparted to us, the remnants of sin are destroyed, venial sin is forgiven, and the heart is cleansed and attuned to higher thoughts and desires, whilst our daily faults and frailties are removed. St. Augustine says: "We do not change this food into ourselves, but it changes us into itself. It renders us divine and transforms our nature, just as fire draws out the nature of wood and transforms it into heat and flame."

2. We are strengthened in Holy Communion, because the God whom we receive is strong. The soul, like the body, needs food to

restore her strength and energy, and she derives it from the Holy Sacrament of the Altar; which is to the soul what bread and wine are to the body. Sin and our everyday struggles and temptations weaken the soul, but her vigor is restored by the bread of Heaven. Even our bodies frequently derive benefit from a good Communion, as the history of many a Saint proves.

3. As in Holy Communion we receive the living God, it makes us immortal. "He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up in the last day" (John, vi, 55). We shall indeed die, however worthily we communicate, but as in Holy Communion we enter into life, it destroys even in our bodies the germ of death and plants in them the seed of immortality, thus preparing them for their resurrection. This most holy Sacrament acts like a remedy upon our bodies and is the pledge to us of future glory.

Love should constrain us to receive Holy Communion frequently, and to remember what benefits are then bestowed upon us, and who unites us with Himself. Our Divine Lord could not have given us a greater proof of His love, and those must indeed be cold of heart who discover all sorts of pretexts for shunning Holy Communion; in their ingratitude they resemble the men of whom we read in the Gospel that they made excuses for not being present at the great feast.

Our own needs should furnish us with an additional reason for going often to Holy Communion. Our Lord wishes it to be the daily food of the living, our remedy in sickness, our strength in weakness, and the means for our growth in righteousness. No one can say that he does not require it! No one's soul is so perfectly healthy as not to need additional strength; and even if it were in full health and vigor it would still have to grow, since whoever

stands still in the spiritual life has already begun to go downhill. Moreover, a soul that is justified must have food, and anyone who puts off taking this food weakens his soul as surely as he would weaken his body by refusing to eat. Holy Communion is the food of the strong.

Finally, this Divine banquet affords us the surest protection against all our spiritual enemies. The early Christians and all the Saints approached the Sacrament as often as they could, and many people at the present day do the same. Frequent Communion is recommended by the Church and the Fathers, who exclude from the Christian community all who refuse to receive the Holy Sacrament of the Altar.

My Brethren, I have reminded you how a worthy Communion helps us to attain true sanctity, spiritual health and strength and everlasting happiness. Would it not be the height of folly to hold aloof from or to despise this most Holy Sacrament? Let us never neglect this priceless benefit, but receive it frequently for our spiritual good. Amen.

19. Preparation for Holy Communion

As we saw last time, Holy Communion, if worthily received, confers the greatest benefits upon us, but if unworthily, it brings upon us stern condemnation. It is therefore of the utmost importance that we should communicate worthily, and I propose to-day to consider how this may best be accomplished.

1. In the first place we must make a good confession, remembering St. Paul's words: "Let a man prove himself, and so let him eat of that bread" (1 Cor., xi, 28). To "prove himself" is to examine carefully the state of his soul and conscience, so as to be sure that there is nothing in him rendering him unworthy of intimate union

with God. Whoever is aware that the holy and just God, who reads the innermost secrets of the human heart, cannot possibly look upon him with pleasure; whoever realizes that he is still the slave of sin and of his unbridled passions and nevertheless goes to Holy Communion without first making a good confession and receiving absolution, is guilty of sacrilege, for this Sacrament is intended for those alive in God's grace, not for those dead in sin. Such a person is guilty of the Body and Blood of Christ, and, as St. Paul says, "eats judgment to himself, because he does not distinguish the Lord's Body from ordinary food, and thus tramples it, as it were, under foot." Therefore an unworthy Communion is punished with death and judgment.

2. Secondly, let us call up lively sentiments of faith, hope and charity, saying or thinking: "O my Jesus; I believe all that Thou hast revealed, and especially that Thou art truly present in the most Holy Sacrament of the Altar, because Thou, who art Thyself unchanging truth, hast said it.

"O my Jesus; in union with all the angels and saints I adore Thee in the most Holy Sacrament, where Thou dwellest unseen, for love of me. I worship Thee as my Lord, my God, my Creator and my Redeemer.

"O my Jesus; I repent of all my sins with my whole heart, because by sinning I have offended Thee, the merciful God, whom I ought to love above all things. My Lord and Saviour, how dare I approach Thee after wronging Thee so often? I am indeed not worthy to receive Thee, but say only one word and my soul will be healed. Thy mercy has no bounds; Thou comest to dwell in my heart. I beseech Thee to sanctify me and fill me with Thy grace.

"O my Jesus; Thou didst love me even to the death of the Cross, and for love of me Thou dost now desire to be the food of my soul.

What return can I make for this love? For love of Thee I am ready to live or to die. Only come to me and take possession of my heart; it shall belong to Thee alone. Come, visit me and strengthen me in Thy grace. Amen."

This would be a good preparation of the soul, but the body too must be prepared for Holy Communion. We must be fasting from midnight and decently dressed, and we must approach the Lord's table with clasped hands and downcast eyes. The server at the altar says the *Confiteor* on behalf of the communicants, and then the priest, turning to them, says: "May Almighty God have mercy on you, forgive you your sins and bring you to life everlasting. Amen. May the Almighty and Merciful Lord grant you pardon, absolution and remission of your sins. Amen." He makes the Sign of the Cross over the people, and then, holding the ciborium, he shows them a consecrated host, saying: "Behold the Lamb of God, behold Him who taketh away the sins of the world." Three times he says: "Lord, I am not worthy that Thou shouldst enter under my roof; say but the word and my soul shall be healed." The words used in administering Holy Communion are: "May the Body of our Lord Jesus Christ preserve thy soul unto life everlasting. Amen." If, after administering Holy Communion, the priest blesses the people with the ciborium, he says in a low voice: "May the blessing of God Almighty, Father, Son and Holy Ghost come down upon you and abide with you forever. Amen."

After receiving Holy Communion, go back quietly to your place and spend some time in fervent prayer. The moments after Communion are a most precious time of grace, and we ought to make the best possible use of them. Say: "O my Jesus, what return can I make Thee for what Thou hast given me? I offer Thee my body and soul, and all that I have. All my thoughts, words, wishes and

actions shall be for Thee alone. O Jesus, kindle my heart with the fire of Thy love that I may love Thee above all things; yes, more than myself. Give me all the graces that I need, for I am so poor and Thou art infinitely rich and merciful. O my Jesus, assist me with Thy grace, strengthen and bless me through this most Holy Sacrament, now and at the hour of my death. Amen."

If you pray in this fashion you will have made a good Communion and will deserve to receive the promised benefits.

Let every Christian consider carefully what riches God wishes to give him in this Holy Sacrament, and then let him resolve to receive it as often as he possibly can, always striving to approach it with purity and devotion of heart, and then he may lawfully hope to participate in all the blessings promised to those who communicate worthily. Amen.

20. The Sacrament of Penance

No one will deny that it behooves every sinner to repent his transgression, to resolve not to sin again, and to make reparation for what he has done. True love of God prompts him to do all this to the utmost of his power, and such action is in harmony with Divine Revelation, for Christ said: "Unless you shall do penance, you shall all perish" (Luke, xiii, 5). Our Lord intended to facilitate the doing of penance by subjecting the contrite confession of sins to the jurisdiction of the Church, and connecting the bestowal of grace with the absolution pronounced by the priest.

That penance is a true Sacrament instituted by Christ, is an article of faith contained in the Creed of Pius IV., which was drawn up at the conclusion of the Council of Trent. The same Council also decided that this Sacrament was instituted by Christ for the purpose of reconciling the faithful with God whenever they fall into sin

(Sess., 14, can. 1). In making this decision, the Church relied not only on our Lord's words giving her power to remit sins, but also on the whole tradition and constant practice of Christians in every age. The Council of Trent made a formal statement to the effect that Penance and Baptism were two distinct Sacraments. This statement was rendered necessary by Protestant errors, but there is abundant ground for it both in Holy Scripture and in the writings of the Fathers. Moreover, the ceremonial of the two Sacraments differs completely; anyone can administer valid Baptism, but it is quite otherwise with Penance.

The Council of Trent teaches that Christ instituted the Sacrament of Penance after His resurrection, when He breathed on the Disciples and promised that they should receive the Holy Ghost and gave them power to forgive sins. None but baptized persons can receive absolution from a bishop or priest, since to these alone, as successors of the Apostles, was power to absolve given. The form of words used in giving absolution is: "I absolve thee from thy sins, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

The effects of Penance are great and numerous.

1. It removes temporal punishment of sin, which remains after the guilt and the eternal punishment of that sin have been remitted. The sinner has to undergo this temporal punishment either in this world or the next, unless he makes up for it by good works.

2. Penance makes us realize our weakness, and as long as we are filled with the spirit of Penance, we do not lose sight of the dangers threatening up on every side, and, being forewarned, we are forearmed against them and more likely to escape all perils.

3. Penance diminishes our inherent tendency to sin. The body is the abode of this disastrous tendency which works through the

senses. Whenever we subdue our body and senses by works of Penance, we oppose this tendency and prevent it from exercising dominion over us.

4. Penance makes it easier for us to discharge our religious duties, which seem difficult only because they clash with our evil inclinations. Penance overcomes these inclinations and thus removes a hindrance to our spiritual progress.

5. Penance, by showing us the futility of earthly things, awakens within us the love of what is higher. Never is a man better disposed to perceive the vanity of the world and to acknowledge that religion alone can afford happiness and peace of mind, than when he does Penance, because then his heart is, as it were, set free from its bondage to the body, and he can view things in their true light.

6. Finally, Penance restores to us the merit of good works previously performed after we have lost all merit by falling into sin. It revives when we are resorted to grace, and the penitent sinner recovers all his privileges, as if he had never sinned.

Several things must be done if the Sacrament of Penance is to be received worthily. We must make an examination of conscience, earnestly repent of our sins, resolve to amend our ways, make a truthful confession and do what we can to make satisfaction for our offences. These five points are indispensable to a good confession. Just as the human body would be incomplete, were one of its members missing, so would our confession be imperfect if one of these points were omitted.

When we consider our grievous tendency to sin and the weakness of our will, we are forced to acknowledge the necessity of Penance. In both the Old and New Testament there is abundant evidence that life in this world must be a life of penance. Both the prophets and

our Divine Lord Himself proclaimed this fact, and the Apostles preached it to their converts.

The Fathers agree that there is a twofold Baptism in the Christian religion, that of water and that of penance, and we can hope for perfect forgiveness of our sins only if we do penance for them. In the lives of the Saints we read of the penances that they performed, because they were convinced that the spirit of Christianity was one of penance, and that it was only by way of penance that sinners could gain admission to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Through the Sacrament of Penance we obtain remission of the eternal punishment due to our sins, and sanctifying grace is restored to us, but the temporal punishment of our sins remains for us to endure either in this world or the next.

However hard we try to live according to God's law, we can never know whether we belong to the number of the elect. It is only prudent therefore to have recourse to the Sacrament of Penance, that in the words of St. Peter we may make our election sure. Works of penance are most beneficial to us, for they not only repair the injury inflicted by sin on our souls, but they are a safeguard against future relapses into sin. God prevents a penitent from delighting in evil, and not only gives him strength to resist it, but withdraws from him the occasion of sin, so that in his weakness he may not yield to temptation.

My Brethren, I beseech you, for God's sake as well as your own, be converted and do penance. You desire happiness here and in eternity, but, as I have shown you, your enjoyment of it depends upon your conversion and penance. If you realize this, you will beg God to give you grace and help, and your sorrow for past sins will be changed into unspeakable joy. Amen.

21. Examination of Conscience

The first essential to a good confession is the examination of conscience, which will reveal to us the multitude and enormity of our sins. How ought we to set about it?

1. We should begin by asking the Holy Ghost to assist us with His grace, for without it we shall not easily accomplish our task. The precise form of prayer is unimportant; we need only say: "Come, Holy Ghost, and enlighten my understanding that I may recognize my sins; touch my heart that I may truly repent of them, frankly confess them, and earnestly strive to amend."

2. We should then call ourselves to account and impartially investigate our conscience, considering how far we have sinned against God, ourselves and our neighbors in thought, word and work. We ought to pay attention to the evil thoughts, desires and inclinations of our hearts, to our besetting and habitual sins, to whatever is impure in actions otherwise good, to our participation in the sins of others, to neglect of our duties, and especially to failure to discharge the duties attached to our position in life.

3. In making our examination of conscience, we have to be on our guard against superficiality and scrupulosity.

Our self-examination will be superficial if we make it in a hurry without method or attention regarding only what is on the surface and passing over the underlying motives. In this way we are apt to deceive ourselves and to think more of the sins that we have not committed, than of those of which we are guilty. Our self-examination will err on the side of scrupulosity if we take too long over it, and in spite of having done our best are still doubtful whether it is adequate.

4. How long ought we to spend in self-examination? The longer

it is since our last confession, and the more duties we have incumbent upon us, the greater amount of time and care shall we have to devote to self-examination. The task will be facilitated if we accustom ourselves to make a short examination of conscience daily, recalling where we have been, and with whom we have come in contact.

The benefit of a daily examination of this kind is incalculable, for it enables us really to know ourselves and to perceive what we are in God's sight. We shall thus be always ready to appear before Him and to render an account of our actions. If we know ourselves, we shall be aware of our chief faults, and such knowledge goes far towards their amendment. In this way we shall have no reason to fear God's judgment, nor shall we be tormented by that secret anxiety which many feel when they only think of their conscience.

By this means we shall really learn to know the condition of our soul and be able to examine our conscience successfully. Therefore, when you desire to make a good confession, begin with an earnest prayer for help, and then set about your self-examination carefully and seriously. Amen.

22. Mortal and Venial Sin

Before you can confess your sins you must think over them seriously. It is a good plan to confess all the sins that you have committed, although you are not strictly bound to confess any but mortal sins. You ought to state precisely how often you have been guilty of a mortal sin, but if this is impossible you must at least state approximately the number of times it has been committed. In the case of venial sins it is enough to say that you have committed them occasionally, generally, frequently or daily.

The Catechism tells us that mortal sin is a grievous offence against God; it is a deliberate transgression of His law in some important matter. God forbade Adam to eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and yet he did so and committed a mortal sin. The wicked angels sinned grievously when, in their desire to be equal with God, they refused to obey Him. As a punishment He cast them from Heaven down into the abyss of hell. The Israelites in the desert sinned grievously. On Mount Sinai amidst thunder and lightning God had proclaimed to the people: "I am the Lord thy God. Thou shalt not have strange gods before me. Thou shalt not make to thyself any graven image to adore it." But nevertheless they made an idol out of the women's golden earrings and worshipped it. The inhabitants of Jerusalem hardened their hearts and refused to believe our Saviour and never abated their hatred until they had brought about His death. This was a mortal sin.

Each time that we do anything that God has strictly forbidden, and deliberately break His law in some important matter, we are guilty of mortal sin. Think of the Ten Commandments; a mortal sin is committed by any one who hates God, practices idolatry, has no faith, perjures himself, wrongs or insults his parents, hates and curses his neighbors or inflicts a serious injury upon their person, property or honor. Immorality is also a mortal sin. Think of the commandments of the Church, given us in God's name. A mortal sin is committed whenever anyone through mere negligence fails to hear Mass on Sunday, eats meat on Friday, or does not receive the Sacraments at Easter.

What are the consequences of mortal sin? The soul is deprived of sanctifying grace and deserves to go to hell; but, for a sin to be really mortal, it must be committed with full knowledge and consent, and it must be a serious offence. Unless a man knows that some ac-

tion is strictly forbidden by God, his sin is not mortal, nor is it so unless it is a fully deliberate and conscious violation of God's law. Mortal sin is so called because it causes the death of the soul. We are bound to confess every mortal sin, saying how often we have committed it.

There are other mortal sins besides those that I have mentioned, and if you cannot decide whether a sin is mortal or not, you should ask your confessor. The number of venial sins is very great. We are guilty of venial sin whenever we neglect prayer, or are bad-tempered, quarrelsome and disobedient, or when we eat or drink to excess, or speak uncharitably of our neighbors,

There is a real difference between mortal and venial sin, but it is a great mistake to look upon venial sin as of no importance. Next after mortal sin, venial sin is the greatest of all evils, because it too is an offence against God. We are often punished for it in this world, and if we escape suffering here, we shall have to endure it in purgatory. Whoever makes light of venial sin, will soon not shrink from mortal sin; wherefore Holy Scripture contains the warning that he who heedeth not little things will perish.

23. Examination of Conscience

We are generally taught to examine our conscience by considering the commandments of God and of the Church, and asking ourselves whether we have transgressed them in thought, word, deed or by omission.

1. The First Commandment requires us to pay God the honor due to His majesty. We do this chiefly in prayer, and it is our duty to pray night and morning. Many think that they are too tired to pray at night, and get straight into bed without giving a thought to the sins committed during the day, and without asking God for pardon and for His protection during the night. In the morning they get up late, dress in all haste, snatch a mouthful of breakfast, and rush off to business. They think nothing of God, never invoke their guardian angel, and never make the morning offering. Some are a little more careful and pray after a fashion, but how? At night they say their prayers without attention, and in the morning their minds are so full of the day's occupation that prayer has not much meaning. We must therefore not only ask ourselves *whether* we have said our morning and night prayers, but also *how* we have said them. Make a note, if necessary, of the number of times that they have been said inattentively, or altogether omitted.

2. The Second Commandment forbids us to take God's name in vain—therefore all cursing and swearing is wrong. Some people are so much in the habit of swearing that they hardly know when they are using bad language, nor do they realize how offensive it is to God.

3. The Third Commandment requires us to keep holy the Sab-

bath Day, and the Church bids us do this chiefly by hearing Mass on Sunday. How many miss Mass for one reason or another! Some are legitimate reasons, such as illness, distance from church, etc., but others are certainly not valid excuses. It is useless to say that the clock was slow, or that you overslept, or that you had to go somewhere else rather than to church. No one hears Mass who arrives after the Gospel or leaves before the Communion. To miss Mass by one's own fault is a grievous sin, and the number of times it has been committed must be stated in confession. We ought also to examine ourselves as to the manner in which we have heard Mass, and whether we have talked or behaved irreverently during it. We break the Third Commandment by doing servile work, that is not necessary, on Sunday for any considerable length of time. This is another point for examination of conscience.

24. Examination of Conscience (Continued)

4. The Fourth Commandment bids us honor our father and mother. Children often find it difficult to obey this commandment, and when their parents give an order, show sulkiness or bad temper, even if they do not directly refuse to do what they are told. Some are rude and violent if punished, and take no pains to amend. Many behave badly in school, pay no attention to their lessons, defy and abuse their teachers. Such children should be careful how they examine their conscience, and must say in confession exactly the manner and the number of times that they have broken this commandment.

5. The Fifth Commandment forbids us to kill, but it includes much more than actual murder, and forbids all anger, hatred, envy, quarrels, and fighting. Occasionally people cherish feelings of

hatred against their neighbors and refuse to have anything to do with them. This is a grievous sin, and reconciliation must be effected before going to confession. It is a great crime to kill a human being, but we may inflict an equally great injury without actually destroying life. Each of us has a supernatural life, and if we lead others to commit grievous sin we rob them of sanctifying grace, which is the supernatural life of the soul. Our Divine Saviour said that it was better for a man to have a millstone tied about his neck and for him to be cast into the sea, rather than give scandal, *i. e.*, teach others evil. In our self-examination we have to see how far we have been guilty of this offence.

25. Examination of Conscience (Continued)

6. The Sixth and Ninth Commandments are closely connected, since both forbid impurity. Our Savior loved children because of the purity of their hearts, whilst He detests impurity, which drags us down to the level of beasts. Any immodest thought or action, of which we feel ashamed, is a sin against purity. We are bound to keep watch over our eyes; if accidentally or in the discharge of our duty we catch sight of some indecent picture, no harm is done, provided that we do not think any more about it. But to feast one's eyes on foul and indecent things is a sin, from which our guardian angel turns away in horror, and which deprives us of God's grace. Impure actions voluntarily performed are sinful and must be mentioned in confession; moreover, we must say how often we have sinned, and whether we have transgressed in thought, desire, words, looks or deeds, and whether we were alone or with others.

7. The Seventh and Tenth Commandments go together, for both refer to our neighbor's property. Many years ago there was

a famous robber named Cartouche. For a long time he was the terror of the countryside, but at last he was taken prisoner and condemned to death. Before his execution he acknowledged his guilt, and said that he had not become a robber all at once—he had begun by stealing his schoolfellows' pens. Children are very apt to take little things that do not belong to them, but this is a fault that cannot be cured too soon. If they grow up accustomed to steal trifles, they will end by being thieves. We all ought to examine ourselves very carefully with regard to the Seventh Commandment, remembering that to damage the property of another is equivalent to stealing it. It is not enough to repent of sins against this commandment; if we have taken what does not belong to us, we must make restitution; if we have damaged another's property, we must make good the injury. No one can receive absolution who, after stealing anything of value, refuses to give it back.

26. Examination of Conscience (Continued)

8. The Eighth Commandment forbids us to bear false witness against our neighbor; therefore, we must neither tell lies nor slander others. Some people are so much in the habit of lying as to be almost incapable of speaking the truth, and yet a lie is, as Holy Scripture describes it, a foul blot upon a man. A person who habitually tells lies will not hesitate to speak evil falsely of others, and thus he commits the sin of slander. In the Bible a slanderer is compared with a serpent stinging in secret. If you deliberately speak in such a way of your neighbor as to detract seriously from his good reputation, so that others look askance at him and refuse to have any dealings with him, you are guilty of a mortal sin, and it is your duty to make reparation by publicly acknowledging that your charges against him were false.

How do matters stand with regard to faults of which our neighbor is really guilty? May we speak of them? No; unless they are already known we must not discuss them unnecessarily, as otherwise we shall calumniate him. Here is a point for self-examination. There is a story that a good Christian, being near death, dreamed that he saw the devil, who held a list of all his sins, and, after reading them aloud, bade him despair of salvation. The sick man replied: "Our Lord promised that if we refrained from judging others, we should not be judged. Now I have never condemned a fellow man, therefore I do not despair, but have full confidence that God will not reject me." The next night the devil came again, and received the same answer; but the third night the man's guardian angel appeared, and tore up the list of his sins, assuring him that, as he had not judged others, no judgment awaited him.

We come now to the Commandments of the Church. We have already spoken of the obligation to keep holy the festivals appointed by the Church and Sundays, and so there is only one other commandment about which we need, as a rule, examine ourselves. It is the second, which requires us to keep the days of fasting and abstinence appointed by the Church. Every Friday is a day of abstinence on which flesh-meat is forbidden, and the fasting days are the week-days in Lent, certain vigils and the ember-days.

After thus considering the Commandments of God and of the Church, we may examine ourselves shortly with reference to the seven deadly sins.

1. *Pride.* A proud man thinks a great deal of himself and his own importance; he boasts of his abilities and knowledge, and looks down on others. He is quarrelsome, obstinate and self-centred.

2. *Covetousness.* A covetous man wants to keep everything

for himself, and to give nothing at all to others, however great their need.

3. *Lust* is the same as impurity.

4. *Envy.* When David killed the giant Goliath, the people exulted, but Saul was angry, fearing that they would honor David more than himself. Ask yourself whether you have ever been jealous of the good fortune and success of others, or have taken delight in seeing others suffer.

5. *Gluttony* and intemperance in food and drink are grievous sins.

6. *Anger* is forbidden by the Fifth Commandment.

7. *Sloth* or laziness in the discharge of one's duties.

We have now seen how the Commandments of God and of the Church can help us to discover the sins of which we have been guilty. Most prayer-books contain forms for examination of conscience, and, as a rule, it is not difficult to find out where we have transgressed. The important thing is to make a frank confession, and to begin by asking the help of the Holy Ghost to enable you to recognize and confess your sins.

27. Contrition

Any one observing the behavior of many who approach the Sacrament of Penance would be apt to suppose that contrition was unessential, and that the priest's absolution alone was of importance. Such an idea, however, would be quite erroneous; contrition for sins committed is absolutely necessary, and nothing can take its place. It is more important than the actual confession, since perfect contrition can take the place of confession where this is impossible. You may confess your sins as often as you like, but as long as you are lacking in genuine contrition, they cannot be forgiven. No priest, no bishop, no, not the Pope himself, can forgive a sinner who does not repent of his sins. Hence contrition is absolutely indispensable both in and apart from the Sacrament of Penance.—Common sense teaches us that God, being just and holy, cannot pardon any but a penitent sinner. By sin we stray away from God, and by penance we must return to Him and forsake sin. Only a contrite heart can do this. By sinning we have shown ourselves ungrateful, disobedient and abominably disloyal to God. Can we realize this fact without being filled with contrition? Holy Scripture teaches us the necessity of contrition. The prophet Joel writes (ii, 12, 13): "The Lord saith: Be converted to me with all your heart, in fasting and in weeping and in mourning, and rend your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to the Lord your God."—David, too, says: "A contrite and humbled heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps., l, 19). Our Lord taught the same doctrine, for He called men to do penance, and told them that, except they did penance, they should perish (Luke, xiii, 5). No one surely can maintain that contrition for sin is unnecessary.

The Catholic Church defines contrition as sorrow for and detesta-

tion of sins committed, accompanied by a serious resolution to avoid sin in future.

1. Contrition is sorrow, and must proceed from the heart, whence came the sin that causes it. Merely outward tokens of contrition are useless unless they are the expression of truly heart-felt sorrow. It is not enough to repeat an act of contrition if there is no inward grief.

As soon as David perceived the enormity of his offense, he exclaimed: "I have sinned against the Lord" (2 Kings, xii, 13). This was the cry of a true penitent, and he expressed his deep sorrow and contrition more fully in the penitential psalms. When Peter had thrice denied his Lord and Master, and the cock's crowing had drawn his attention to his sin, he went out and wept bitterly. Tears such as these, shed in deep sorrow for sins committed, and not through mere emotion, are precious in God's sight, although it is quite possible to mourn over sins without shedding tears. The publican who came into the Temple to pray at the same time as the Pharisee, remained standing afar off, and would not so much as lift up his eyes to heaven, but struck his breast, saying: "God be merciful to me a sinner." These simple words expressed the feeling of a contrite and humbled heart.

Contrition involves also a detestation of sin; it is not enough for us to renounce sin, but we must hate and abhor it. Our sorrow for and detestation of sin must be greater than our grief for any temporal misfortune, because sin is the worst of all evils. Moreover, our contrition must be universal, and include all the grievous sins that we have committed, as well as every other sin for which we desire forgiveness. There can be no true contrition where there is a lurking affection for a single mortal sin. Finally, our contrition must be supernatural. Merely natural regrets for the

disgrace, loss, shame or annoyance due to sin may serve to deter us from further wrong-doing, but they are no evidence that our hearts have forsaken sin and turned to God. They show rather that we hate the consequences of sin, and not sin itself. Our contrition must be supernatural; *i. e.*, we must be sorry for sin because we have disobeyed and offended God and been ungrateful and disloyal to Him. This supernatural contrition is perfect, if our sorrow is due chiefly to our love of God, and not to any thought of the eternal punishment of sin. Mary Magdalene set us a noble example of perfect contrition; she had been a notorious sinner, but after learning to know our Lord, she renounced sin and returned to God. She loved Jesus above all things and grieved bitterly over her past life. When she heard that He was at the Pharisee's house, she went in and began to anoint His feet with precious ointment and to wipe them with her hair. Seeing her love and contrition, our Lord said of her: "Many sins are forgiven her, because she hath loved much."

Supernatural contrition is imperfect, when it does not proceed chiefly from love of God. The Ninivites were moved by fear of impending destruction to do penance, so their contrition was imperfect.

Let us try to repent of our sins from motives of love rather than of fear, and to be able to say with truth: "O God, I am very sorry that I have sinned against Thee and offended Thee, my loving Father, my tenderest Friend and my greatest Benefactor. I grieve that I have been so disobedient, so ungrateful and so unfaithful to Thee. How much hast Thou done for love of me, and what has been my return for Thy goodness? Father, I have sinned against heaven and before Thee; I am no more worthy to be called Thy child; but forgive me, Lord; I resolve not to sin again. Amen."

28. Purpose of Amendment

A resolution to avoid sin in future is inseparable from true contrition for past sins. The Prodigal Son, in his sorrow for his offences, resolved to go back to his father and never to leave him again. Every sinner who seeks forgiveness from God must make a similar resolution. It is no less necessary than repentance; for how can any one hate and detest his sins and still cherish a desire to commit them again?

This good resolution must be *general* and *serious, general,* because we must resolve carefully to avoid *all* sins, without exception, and especially mortal sins. A resolution of amendment is worth nothing if it is made to depend upon some particular time, place, person or circumstance. For instance, people sometimes say: "When I am older, when I have left this house, when I have come to terms with so and so, or when I am better off, then I will improve." Such a resolution is of no value.

A good resolution must be *serious,* and include a determination to avoid occasions of sin, as well as sin itself, and also to make reparation for injuries inflicted on others. A true penitent must make up his mind not to frequent places or associate with people likely to cause him to sin. He must also resolve to employ every possible means of improvement, especially vigilance and prayer.

Sometimes there may be weighty reasons for making some modification in a resolution or some delay in carrying it into effect desirable. I am not referring to reasons of this kind, but to the very common carelessness which makes us forget our promise of amendment. This unpardonable indifference encourages the revival of our evil inclinations, prevents virtues from growing to perfection, and finally hinders us from receiving an increase of divine grace.

In proportion to the growth of our tendencies to evil, is the diminution of our capacity for virtue, and for want of supernatural assistance our souls can make no progress; and, as it is impossible to stand still on the way of perfection, they slip back gradually into indifference.

Neglect of good resolutions robs the soul of the precious gift of perseverance, for whoever never really begins to do right, will certainly never succeed. Only those who persevere steadfastly in carrying out their good resolutions will receive the crown of life, which guarantees a happy end to this existence and a joyful beginning to life everlasting. What strength and consolation it affords both in life and at death!

My brethren, let us be steadfast and abide by our good resolutions to serve God faithfully, to limit our intercourse with the world, to deny ourselves amusements, to behave more reverently in the house of God, to mortify our own will, to keep watch over our senses, to subdue our passions and to be less self-indulgent, and let no amount of difficulties, contradiction or ridicule cause us to abandon these resolutions.

Perseverance will seem easier if we look forward to the future. Who knows how long life will last? The end of our pilgrimage may be close at hand; therefore let us begin each day with a renewal of our resolutions, just for that day. It is surely possible to persevere in well-doing for one day. In this way the days will slip by, and we shall continue steadfastly on the right path, until at length Our Lord will come and bestow upon us the crown of eternal life.

29. Immediate Occasions of Sin

A good resolution must include a determination to avoid occasions of sin, that is to say, to avoid any person, place, game, book, or in short anything that is likely to cause us to sin. Unless we

avoid occasions of sin, we are not really desirous of avoiding sin itself. Eve allowed herself to talk to the serpent, although she must have known that it was wicked, and thus she played into the devil's hands. Peter acted recklessly in following Our Saviour to the high priest's house and sitting with the soldiers by the fire, and consequently he yielded to temptation and thrice denied his Lord. We ought to be careful to avoid bad company and occasions of sin, and to remember our own frailty. In the Our Father we are taught to say: "Lead us not into temptation," and St. Paul says: "Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor., x, 12).

It may cost us a great deal to avoid occasions of sin, but we must give up, if need be, even such apparently indispensable things as a foot, a hand or an eye. Our Saviour says: "If thy hand or thy foot scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed or lame than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. It is better for thee having one eye to enter into life, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire."

A father once gave his son a basket of beautiful fruit, some of which, however, was beginning to decay. The boy wanted to throw away the bad fruit, but the father checked him and said it would do no harm. So the basket was set aside, and a few hours later the boy found that all the fruit was mouldy and had a bad smell. He was much distressed, but his father told him that the basket of fruit was intended to teach him a useful lesson: viz., that corruption spreads rapidly and soon affects what is naturally sound. The same is the case with human beings: whoever associates with the wicked is only too likely to be infected with their vices. We cannot be too careful in avoiding occasions of sin.

30. Confession (*in General*)

Confession is a frank and contrite acknowledgment of guilt, a disclosure of the state of one's conscience to a priest, made in order to receive absolution from him. It is a serious business undertaken for the good of our souls, which, if it is properly performed, will certainly obtain for us forgiveness of sins, an increase of sanctifying grace and eternal salvation. The priest's absolution, pronounced on earth, is ratified in heaven, so that God Himself seems to say: "Go in peace, thy sins are forgiven thee."

According to Our Lord's ordinance, confession is so absolutely necessary for forgiveness that, if it is possible for us to confess our sins, we are bound to do so in order to obtain absolution. Our Divine Saviour gave the Apostles and their successors power and authority to retain, as well as to forgive sins; and intended them to retain those of the impenitent, and to forgive those only of the truly penitent sinners. Before priests can either retain or remit sins, they must form an opinion regarding the worthiness of the persons who seek forgiveness. In order that they may be in a position to form such a judgment, it is absolutely necessary for a sinner to make a frank confession and to lay bare the whole state of his soul. It is just as certain that sinners are under an obligation to confess their sins as it is that priests have power to forgive or to retain the same.

If a judge is required to condemn or to acquit a man charged with some offense, he is, of course, required to investigate the charge. If a physician is called in to prescribe for a patient, he is, of course, bound to examine carefully the sick man's condition. Now a confessor is at the same time judge and physician. As judge, he must, according to Our Lord's injunctions, decide whose sins are to be

remitted and whose retained. As physician, he must prescribe remedies. He can do neither unless the penitent discloses fully, frankly and plainly the state of his conscience.

Confession is therefore of divine institution, and most necessary for the forgiveness of sins. It has been practised in the Catholic Church in every age and place, and has always been regarded as indispensable, which would surely not have been the case if there were no need for it. Heretics declare confession to be a merely human institution, that can be set aside at pleasure; but we ought not to trouble ourselves about heretical opinions, that are contrary to God's Word and to the explicit teaching of the Catholic Church.

Let us now consider who is bound to go to confession.

1. According to the divine law every Christian who has fallen into grievous sin, or who is in doubt whether he has committed a mortal sin or not, is bound to confess the same.

2. According to the law of the Church, every Christian, who has reached the age of reason, is bound to confess his sins at least once in each year.

The benefits of confession are very great.

1. A penitent receives advice how to amend his ways.

2. He gains an accurate knowledge of himself.

3. He obtains instruction, consolation and help in most important matters.

4. Anxious souls are comforted, and the ignorant, doubtful and erring are instructed.

5. The religious instruction given in the confessional is better adapted to the needs of an individual than that given in public.

6. The penitent learns to shrink from sin in the future.

7. He is moved to make reparation for scandals and injuries to the reputation and property of others.

8. Confession leads to the reconciliation of enemies and to the avoidance of occasions of sin.

9. Confession is a most effectual remedy for certain secret sins that ruin men in mind and body.

10. The very thought that sins must be confessed is often a powerful deterrent.

11. Much consolation is derived from confession, as the penitent may hope to receive pardon and the grace of God.

If we all had recourse to this wonderful remedy often and in the right way, we should soon become different people. Confession is undeniably both beneficial and necessary to our soul's welfare; it is ordained for our temporal and eternal good, so let us employ it as the Church intends and according to Our Lord's design; let us take care that each confession shall be complete, frank and intelligible.

1. A confession is *complete* if we mention every grievous sin that we have committed, and all the circumstances that aggravate or modify it. We should state also how often we have sinned, and if we cannot give the precise number, we must give the priest approximately some idea of it. We must say where, why, with whom and against whom we have sinned, avoiding all mention of names and all superfluous details.

2. A confession is *frank* if we neither exaggerate nor diminish, nor make excuses for our sins, but confess them without reserve in proper language. A confession that is lacking in frankness obtains for us neither valid absolution nor peace of mind, and a communion made after such a confession is sinful and brings con-

demnation upon us. It is far better to confess one's sins to a priest, who is pledged to silence regarding them, than to live and die in a state of misery, and at the last day to be put to shame before all mankind.

3. A confession is *intelligible* when the priest can hear and understand what one says. There is no need to speak so loud that other people in the church overhear, nor to be wanting in propriety and modesty, nor must we ever use vague and ambiguous language, for, though it is possible to mislead a priest, it is impossible to deceive God.

On entering the confessional, kneel down and the priest will give you his blessing in these words: "May the Lord be in your heart and on your lips, that you may, with truth and humility, confess all your sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, Amen." Then make your confession, with the usual introduction and conclusion, after which listen attentively to the priest's exhortation and instruction, and notice what penance he gives you. Before the absolution, he says: "May Almighty God have mercy upon you, forgive you all your sins, and bring you to life everlasting. Amen. May Our Lord Jesus Christ absolve you; by His authority I release you from all bonds, as far as I can and you require; therefore, I absolve you from your sins in the name of the Father, etc."

After the absolution the priest says one more short prayer, and then bids the penitent "Go in peace."

You may then leave the confessional and say the penance appointed, thanking God for restoring you once more to His favor. Should the priest refuse to give you absolution, you must submit willingly, follow his advice most carefully, and strive by true

amendment to make yourself worthy to receive absolution at your next confession.

Try always to discharge this most important duty with genuine contrition and seriousness, that you may enjoy the benefits resulting from it, and accomplish God's design. Amen.

31. General Confession

Perhaps no one would deny that it is beneficial for every adult Christian to make a general confession at least once in his life. By means of such a confession many sins previously unheeded are detected, many trangressions that fear or shame has concealed, are frankly revealed, and former, incomplete confessions, are amplified and made good. A sinner who intends to make a general confession surveys his whole life and sees perhaps for the first time all his sins and shortcomings in their full wickedness. A general confession offers an excellent opportunity for instruction, both general and particular, on the moral and religious truths of faith. Many people then learn to understand aright doctrines and commandments which they have hitherto misinterpreted, in spite of all the instruction that they have received. A general confession often marks a turning point in life, and many a penitent can date from it his real amendment, for he settles his account with God more satisfactorily than in any previous confession, he resolves to break once for all with the past, and to cast all the burden of his sinful life into the abyss of God's mercy. Like the taking of a vow, though in a different manner, a general confession may be a great assistance in enabling a man to lead a good, religious life. In any case it is good for everyone to recount to God all his years in the bitterness of his soul (Is., xxxviii, 15). Whatever objections may be raised against general confessions, they will continue to be beneficial and even necessary. We are told that they do not always attain their end, and that penitents do not improve after making them, that they tend to disturb and confuse scrupulous minds, and to produce an exaggerated display of false piety. However, all undesirable results of general confession ought to be ascribed, not

to the confession itself, but to the defective way in which it is made.

A general confession requires too much time for it to be made on an ordinary day, when crowds surround the confessional. It should be preceded by a particular confession of sins committed since the Sacrament of Penance was last approached. The general confession may be made by passing in review the ten commandments of God, the seven capital or deadly sins, the ways in which we become answerable for the sins of others, the sins against the Holy Ghost, the sins crying to Heaven for vengeance, and the commandments of the Church. Each period of life should be examined carefully with reference to each of these points, and in this way the confession will proceed quietly and methodically, since the penitent will be reminded of his faults.

If previous confessions have been invalid, a general confession becomes necessary; it is well to make one before one's first Communion, on entering upon a new kind of life, in dangerous sickness, or on the occasion of a jubilee or mission. It is advisable to consult a confessor as to whether or no in his opinion a general confession is likely to be beneficial. Preparation for it is a much more serious business than preparation for an ordinary confession, but if it is made thoroughly well, a penitent derives from it great benefit and consolation, that will make it easy for him to face death.

32. Satisfaction

It is not enough to perceive, repent of and confess our sins. We must also make satisfaction for them in order to preserve a spirit of true contrition, to make good the harm caused by our sins, and to avert the punishment due to them. Satisfaction is reparation for

injury inflicted on another. When we sin we incur a debt to God, for which some payment must be made.

There are three ways in which spiritual satisfaction can be made. The first and best supplies superabundant repayment; it is supplied by Christ our Lord, who by dying on the cross made full satisfaction to God for all our sins. No created being could have delivered us from the burden of such a debt, but He in His infinite dignity made complete and superabundant compensation and reparation for the sins of the whole world. The second kind of satisfaction is called canonical, and is made during a definite period of time. In the early Church it was usual for the priest pronouncing Absolution to lay upon the penitent some punishment, the performance of which was called satisfaction. The same name is applied to every kind of penalty for our sins, whether self-imposed or laid upon us by a priest.

Lastly, we speak of making reparation or satisfaction by giving God the honor due to Him. It is obvious that no one can do this who is not determined to avoid all sin, so that it involves renouncing all occasions and temptations to sin.

Sin has two consequences, guilt and punishment. When sin is forgiven, its eternal punishment in hell is remitted, but it frequently happens that the temporal punishment remains. There are clear instances of this in Holy Scripture, the most noteworthy being that of David. Although Nathan had said to him: "The Lord hath taken away thy sin" (2 Kings, xii, 15), David voluntarily underwent very severe punishment, and prayed incessantly for mercy. Moreover, God inflicted much suffering upon him as a penalty for his transgression.

In Baptism all punishment for sin is remitted, but this is not the case in the Sacrament of Penance, for otherwise we might too easily

think lightly of sin and fall into it recklessly, thus laying up for ourselves God's wrath at the day of judgment. Punishment serves as a deterrent from sin, and makes us more vigilant and careful to avoid it in future.

Satisfaction is, as it were, an outward token of our sorrow for sin, and a reparation for the wrong that we have done to the Church. Moreover, when others see that we have to pay the penalty for our wrongdoing, they will be put on their guard and be warned to amend their way of life.

By patiently enduring our punishment we shall in some degree resemble our Lord Jesus Christ, who bore so much for our sake. St. Paul says that if we suffer with Christ we are joint heirs with Him.

Finally the penance imposed upon us averts God's chastisement from us, since, as St. Paul assures us, if we judge ourselves we shall not be judged (1 Cor., xi, 31). The satisfaction that we make does not obscure the full and superabundant satisfaction made by Jesus Christ but enhances its splendor, for the grace of Christ appears to be more lavishly conferred upon us, inasmuch as we participate not only in His own merits, but in those that He, as the Head, bestows upon His members, viz., the Church. This grace is poured out upon our good works, and without it we can do nothing meritorious, nor make any kind of reparation to God. Two things are necessary if we are to make any true satisfaction for our sins—we must be just and friends of God, for works performed without faith and charity cannot possibly please Him. Further, the works that we do must be such as to cost us some pain and inconvenience, for if they are to be a reparation for sin, they must necessarily contain an element of bitterness.

Satisfaction is made as a rule by means of prayer, fasting or

almsgiving. Prayer is a remedy for pride in life, fasting is a remedy for the desire of the flesh, and almsgiving is a remedy for the desire of the eyes. If we consider whom we have wronged, we can easily understand why these three forms of satisfaction are chosen. When we sin we wrong God, our neighbor and ourselves. Now we can avert God's anger by our prayers, we can help our neighbor by almsgiving, and we can punish ourselves by fasting. You see, my brethren, why, after making our confession, we must also make reparation or satisfaction. I have shown you what is meant by this and what form it takes. Be careful always to perform conscientiously the penance imposed upon you by the priest or by your own sense of justice, that you may participate in the graces attached to the Sacrament of Penance.

33. Indulgences

An indulgence is the remission of the temporal punishment due to sin, which punishment we should have to undergo in Purgatory in order to satisfy the Divine justice. The Church uses the authority that she has received from Christ and remits this temporal punishment after we have been forgiven in the Sacrament of Penance and the eternal punishment has been remitted. Our Lord gave His Church power to bind and to loose, and this power extends to the sin itself, as well as to the temporal punishment that it entails. When therefore a priest gives Absolution, he releases the penitent from the guilt of sin; and when for some good reason he refuses or defers Absolution, he binds the guilt fast upon the sinner, and what a priest does here is ratified in Heaven.

As to temporal punishment, a priest can impose a severe penance for grievous sins, or a milder one if the sins are less grievous, or if he judges it expedient. This twofold power, derived from our

Saviour's own words, has always existed in the Church, and when she exercises it with regard to the temporal punishment we have what is called an indulgence.

St. Paul availed himself of his authority to grant an indulgence. A Christian in Corinth had given scandal by his sins, and the apostle rebuked the Corinthians for not having banished him from their midst. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ and with the authority derived from Him, St. Paul excommunicated the sinner, but afterwards as he repented and amended his way of life, the Corinthians interceded for him and asked St. Paul to remit the punishment. A portion of it was consequently remitted, which he would otherwise have had to undergo.

In the primitive Church the bishops used to grant indulgences, especially to faint-hearted Christians who denied their faith in times of persecution, and as men lost their first enthusiasm, their need of indulgences increased. Originally very severe penalties were imposed upon sinners, in order to satisfy Divine justice. Some were required to fast for years, or even for life; others had to stand, clad in sackcloth, at the church-doors and were excluded for a definite period from the communion of the faithful; while others had to give large sums to the poor or perform other good works. The chief object of indulgences is to remit these penances. When, therefore, the Church gives an indulgence of forty days or of a year, just as much of the temporal punishment is remitted as if we had performed for forty days or a year any of the penitential works that the Church formerly imposed. In later times it became usual for the Church to remit the whole of the temporal punishment, and this was called granting a plenary indulgence.

Some people suppose that an indulgence justifies the person who gains it, and cleanses his soul from every stain of sin. This is, how-

ever, quite a mistaken idea, for no one can gain an indulgence unless he is already in the state of grace, having made a good confession. The object of an indulgence is to clear a sinner from the temporal punishment that he still has to suffer, and the sin must already be forgiven and the eternal punishment remitted. True repentance and an earnest purpose of amendment are therefore indispensable, and a sinner who wishes to gain an indulgence must not lose sight of this fact. The Church has no desire to relieve him of the obligation to renounce sin and avoid all its occasions, but by offering him this favor she wishes to induce him to begin a new life, to stimulate and reward his ardor, to sustain his weakness, and to make good the defects in his works of penance by allowing him to share in the merits of Christ and the saints. The merit won by Christ upon the cross is infinite, far outweighing the sins of all mankind; but this merit can benefit those only who do what is required of them for their part. Therefore only those who comply with these chief conditions and do the penance or say the prayers prescribed by the Church will profit by our Lord's death. An indulgence does not exonerate a Christian from all penance; the duty of denying and mortifying himself is unaffected by it and continues as long as he lives. After he has been reconciled to God by a good confession and has purged his conscience from sin, he becomes capable of gaining an indulgence, which does not remit sin but only the temporal punishment still remaining after the sin is forgiven.

The idea of a jubilee indulgence originated in the Jewish year of jubilee, when the prisons were opened, debts were cancelled, and every man regained possession of lands that had been sold. The jubilee of the new dispensation restores us to the liberty enjoyed by God's children, the bonds of sin are broken, and we regain the

grace that we had forfeited. The aim of a jubilee is to cure the soul completely of all wounds caused by sin and to equip her with fresh grace to prevent further falls into evil. Therefore if we desire to reap the benefits of a jubilee indulgence we must honestly resolve to do penance for the past and to lead a better life in future. It is not enough to pray, fast and give alms unless we do these things in such a way as to make satisfaction to God's justice, and do them in spirit and in truth. The chief thing is to amend one's evil ways and to live in a manner more pleasing to God and more edifying to one's neighbor.

If, in order to gain a jubilee indulgence, it were necessary to perform very hard penances, to fast for years, to say very long prayers, or to spend large sums of money in almsgiving, there might be some excuse for our unwillingness to gain the indulgence at such a cost. But the Church, like a considerate mother, asks of us only what we can easily do without too great a sacrifice of comfort. Therefore it would show unpardonable carelessness if we failed to exert ourselves in order to obtain this favor. Let us be zealous in doing the little penances required of us, and now, while there is still time, let us cast ourselves into the arms of God's mercy and remember that we shall not always have an opportunity of gaining so priceless a boon.

34. Extreme Unction

This Sacrament derives its name from the fact that it is the last of all the anointings instituted by our Lord in the Church. It is also called the Sacrament of the Dying. It possesses all the characteristics of a true Sacrament, viz., an outward sign, our Lord's institution, and invisible grace. The outward sign is holy oil; according to the decision of the Council of Trent, the oil used in Extreme

Unction must be consecrated by a bishop. Oil soothes bodily pain, is a remedy in disease, is a source of light, and restores wasted strength. God's grace has an effect upon the sick person's soul resembling the action of oil upon the body.

Extreme Unction is a true Sacrament, because it was instituted by Jesus Christ, and St. James tells us this fact and also how the Sacrament should be administered. Our Lord sent out two of His disciples to preach penance; they cast out devils and anointed the sick with oil, thus restoring them to health. But when Christ ordered the sick to be anointed it was not so much for the sake of their bodies as for that of their souls, to which Divine grace is imparted through the oil.

Extreme Unction is a Sacrament because invisible grace is connected with the outward and visible sign. It remits venial sins and delivers the soul from the consequences of past transgressions. The sick man receives strength to withstand the assaults of the devil, and his bodily health will be restored if its restoration is conducive to the welfare of his soul.

The Sacrament is administered with certain ceremonies and prayers. On entering the sick man's room the priest greets him and those present with the words, "Peace be to this house." He calls upon the friends of the sick man to pray, then he sprinkles him with holy water and reminds him to make a good confession, if he has any sins upon his conscience. Even if the sick person has already made his confession, he joins with the priest in saying the Confiteor. Then, holding the vessel containing the holy oil, the priest stretches his right hand over the sick person's head and prays in the name of the Blessed Trinity that all evil may be extinguished in him by the intercession of all the angels and saints. Dipping his thumb in the holy oil, the priest anoints the sick person on the

eyes, saying: "Through this holy unction and through His most tender mercy may the Lord pardon thee whatever sins thou hast committed by seeing." He utters a similar prayer as he anoints the ears, nose, lips, hands and feet. These parts of the body are anointed because they are especially the organs of sense, and just as, in treating disease, a physician attacks the seat whence the malady originates, so the priest anoints those members which are primarily concerned with conveying sense perceptions to the brain.

After the anointing is finished he prays that it may be for the sanctification, strengthening and comfort of the sick man's soul, and also for the restoration of health to his body. Should, however, God in His mercy call him hence, may he be admitted to everlasting life with Jesus Christ, our Lady, and all the saints in Heaven. The priest offers the sick man the crucifix to kiss and reminds him that our Divine Saviour who died on the cross bestows by His infinite merits through this Sacrament strength to the soul, and, if He sees fit, health also to the body. Therefore we should thank Him for the grace given us by this means, put all our confidence in Him, bear patiently all bodily sufferings, and submit completely to God's holy will, both in life and in death.

Extreme Unction is accompanied by more prayers than the other Sacraments, because prayer is especially needed in time of sickness. The priest does not merely touch the sufferer's members to give him comfort and refreshment, but he acts in God's name and by His authority. Both the priest and the oil are the instruments through which God Himself gives abundant grace. Whenever a man desires any favor from God he must approach Him with a humble and penitent heart, saying with the publican, "O God, be merciful to me, a sinner." This is particularly necessary in the case of the grace given in Extreme Unction, because this Sacrament

is closely connected with the Sacrament of Penance and the forgiveness of sins. This is why a sick man makes his confession and receives Holy Communion before the administration of Extreme Unction.

It is foolish to suppose that any one is bound to die soon after being anointed, for the Sacrament cannot injure the patient or expose him to danger. On the contrary, its results are beneficial both to his body and soul. They are, speaking in general terms, the same as those of other Sacraments, viz., forgiveness, sanctification and union with God. Moreover, venial sins are remitted if they have not been removed in the Sacrament of Penance. There is, however, one effect peculiar to this Sacrament, viz., its action upon the body. Baptism obliterates original sin and the guilt thereof; Confirmation imparts spiritual strength; Penance bestows forgiveness for grievous sins; but Extreme Unction tends to peace of mind and strength and healing of body. It consecrates the body, withdraws it from the influence of pain, and renders it more capable of enduring the attacks of disease. Hence this Sacrament benefits man as a whole, body and soul.

Finally, it affords ease, consolation and help at the hour of death, it gives us protection and assistance in our last battle with the powers of evil, as the prayer of faith is poured out for the sick man, and our Lord will not refuse him His aid. Thus our Divine Saviour has supplied us with a special weapon of defense for use at the close of life. Our Baptism admitted us to the Kingdom of God on earth; Extreme Unction will facilitate our entrance into His Kingdom in Heaven. Let us thank our dear Lord for His love in giving us this Sacrament, and let us resolve never to put off until too late the reception of this Divine form of assistance, designed to be our safeguard at the hour of death.

35. Holy Orders and the Priesthood

Through the grace and merits of Jesus Christ the Church possesses a sacrifice, Sacraments and the Gospel, and enjoys perpetual protection in her task of offering the sacrifice, administering the Sacraments and preaching the Gospel. All these functions have to be discharged by human agency, so she needs priests to offer to God the unbloody sacrifice of reconciliation on our behalf, to administer the Divine mysteries through which the atoning and sanctifying grace of the Holy Ghost is bestowed, and to preach the Gospel, which is the power of God to save all who believe. In His infinite mercy our eternal high-priest, Jesus Christ, has supplied these needs, for just as He was sent by the Father, so did He send His apostles and disciples to all nations, after first giving them the Holy Ghost and equipping them for their holy calling. He ordered them to go forth and preach the Gospel in all the world, to baptize, to forgive sins, to administer the Sacraments and to celebrate Holy Mass in commemoration of Him. As the spiritual needs of the faithful are the same in every age, and our Divine Saviour desires to help all and bring all to a knowledge of the truth, He commissioned the Apostles to select others to succeed them in their sacred office, and by laying on of hands and by prayer to confer upon them the authority that He Himself possessed and exercised, thus giving them the peculiar assistance required for the conscientious discharge of their difficult duties, and consecrating them for their sacred office.

Consequently the Apostles, whenever they established a Christian community, appointed officials upon whom they laid their hands, and thus ordained them priests of the new dispensation. St. Paul

appointed Titus bishop of Crete, and Timothy bishop of Ephesus in this way.

The bishops appointed by the Apostles selected other good and honest men to be their successors and ordained them priests. This practice has continued without interruption in the Church, and as often as any are to be ordained, the bishops, who are in a peculiar sense the successors of the Apostles, lay their hands upon them and pray. Various ceremonies accompany this solemn ordination, intended partly to remind the new priests of their important duties and partly to add dignity to their exalted office and sacred calling. Like kings, prophets and high-priests of the Jewish dispensation, they are anointed with holy oil. Holy Orders is, according to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, a Sacrament, since invisible grace is attached to the visible sign. When the bishop lays his hands on the candidate's head and prays, his actions indicate the bestowal of grace and authority. There are several stages leading up to the priesthood, and this is so arranged by the Church in order to add dignity to the highest office, which, according to the Council of Trent, involves the performance of a truly Divine work.

There are four minor orders, those, namely, of *ostiarius* or doorkeeper, *lector* or reader, *exorcist* and *acolyte*. The major orders are the subdiaconate, the diaconate and the priesthood.

The tonsure is given by way of preparation to ordination, the cutting of the hair having the same sort of signification as the vows before Baptism, or the mutual promises before matrimony. The tonsure is mentioned by the earliest Fathers, and the Church teaches that its use was introduced by the Apostles, and that St. Peter adopted it in memory of the crown of thorns placed on our Redeemer's head. In this way what was done to inflict pain and disgrace upon our Lord became a mark of honor and a reminder to

the ministers of the Church that they must aim at resembling their Divine Master in every respect.

1. After receiving the tonsure, the first of the minor orders is conferred, that namely of *ostiarius* or doorkeeper. The doorkeeper's duty is to keep the key of the church and prevent the excommunicated from passing the threshold. He assists at Holy Mass, guarding the priest from any interruptions. When conferring this order, the bishop takes a key from the altar and gives it to the candidate, saying, "Act, so as to be able to give account of all that is locked up with this key."

2. The second minor order is that of *lector* or reader. The lector is allowed to read both the Old and New Testament publicly, and to instruct the faithful in the elements of their religion. In the presence of the congregation the bishop hands him the book containing what he is empowered to read, saying: "Take this book and read the Word of God; if you exercise your office faithfully and profitably, you will have your portion with those who from the beginning have guarded the Word of God."

3. The third minor order is that of *exorcist.* The exorcist is authorized to call upon the name of the Lord over persons possessed by evil spirits. The bishop hands him the book of exorcisms, saying: "Take and impress this upon your memory, and receive power to lay hands upon the possessed."

4. The last of the minor orders is that of *acolyte.* It is the acolyte's duty to attend the priests and deacons at High Mass. The bishop gives him a lighted candle, saying: "Take the candlestick with the candle, and know that you are appointed to light the candles in church, in the name of the Lord." He hands him also an empty vessel, saying: "Take this vessel, in order to bring therein wine and

water for the sacrifice of the Blood of Christ, in the name of the Lord."

5. None can be admitted to the major, who have not received the minor orders. The first major order is the *subdiaconate,* and the subdeacon's duty is to assist the deacon at the altar. The ordination ceremonies indicate plainly what he has to do. The bishop reminds him that he now pledges himself to perpetual celibacy and explains his duties. Then the subdeacon receives from the bishop the chalice and paten, and from the deacon the cruet. This shows that he is inferior to the deacon. The bishop says: "Behold what service is required of you, therefore I admonish you to behave so as to please God." Other prayers follow, and the subdeacon is attired in the sacred vestments and receives the Book of the Epistles from the bishop, who says: "Take the Book of the Epistles and receive authority to read it aloud in the church."

6. The second major order is the *diaconate.* The deacon's duties are more sacred and more numerous than those of a subdeacon. He has to wait upon the bishop, assist him in his sacred functions, and read the Gospel at Mass. He may also collect and distribute alms for the poor, and preach in case of necessity. In conferring the diaconate, the bishop reads several prayers, gives the candidate certain vestments, lays his hands upon him, and gives him the Book of the Gospels, saying: "Receive authority to read the Gospel in God's church in the name of the Lord."

7. The highest of all orders is the *priesthood.* None but a priest may offer the holy sacrifice and administer the Sacraments. At the ordination of a priest the bishop and all the priests present lay their hands upon him, then the stole is passed over his shoulders and crossed on his breast, indicating that he has power to bear the cross of Christ and the gentle yoke of the Divine law, and is to

teach others to do the same, both by words and example. The bishop then anoints his hands with holy oil and gives him the chalice containing wine and the paten with bread, saying: "Receive power to offer to the Lord the sacrifice of the Mass." He thus becomes the messenger of God and a mediator between God and man. Finally the bishop again lays his hands on his head, saying: "Receive the Holy Ghost; whosesoever sins you remit, they are remitted; and whosesoever sins you retain, they are retained." In this way the bishop confers upon the newly-made priest the power of forgiving and retaining sins, which our Lord gave to His followers. Such are the chief features of the ceremony of ordination.

The *episcopate* is a higher degree of the priesthood, since the bishops posses the dignity and authority of the Apostles, whose successors they are. Christ preferred the Apostles to the rest of His disciples, and so the bishops take precedence of the priests. Whatever they bind and loose on earth is bound and loosed in Heaven. They are appointed by the Holy Ghost to govern the Church of Christ, and each bishop has to administer his own diocese.

Archbishops are set over several bishops, and generally have their sees in capital cities. They have a higher rank and more extensive power than ordinary bishops.

Still higher are the *patriarchs,* who are the most exalted fathers of the Church. Formerly in the whole Catholic Church there were, besides the Pope, only four patriarchs; those, namely, of Constantinople, Alexandria, Antioch and Jerusalem.

The bishop of Rome has always been honored as the one supreme head of the Catholic Church. He is the father of all the faithful, all the bishops and priests of the universal Church, for he is the successor of St. Peter, and the true and lawful vicar of Christ.

All bishops throughout Christendom are bound to agree with him in matters of faith and morals, to be in communion with him and to obey his regulations.

My brethren, we should often thank God for the Sacrament of Holy Order, since it provides us with men empowered to offer the holy sacrifice on our behalf, to administer the Sacraments, and to instruct us, so that we may live in virtue and attain to everlasting salvation. Let us respect them as God's appointed representatives, consecrated and endowed with manifold dignities; let us listen attentively to their teaching, since by so doing we shall give honor also to God, and carry out His intentions.

36. Matrimony

Matrimony or marriage is the conjugal union between persons naturally and legally fit to be united by an indissoluble bond. Husband and wife enter into a conjugal union, which differs altogether from any other alliance for mutual advantage that may be formed between a man and a woman. They must be legally fit to marry, as no marriage can take place between persons in whose case a legal impediment exists, and the bond, once formed, is indissoluble.

It follows from what has been said that marriage consists in the union of two persons of opposite sex. It can be regarded both as a natural union and as a Sacrament.

1. Marriage was instituted by God Himself, for we read in the book of Genesis that God created a man and a woman, and blessed them, bidding them increase and multiply. God said: "It is not good for man to be alone; let us make him a help like unto himself." God did not merely institute marriage, but also made it permanent and indissoluble, because our Lord said: "What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder." In saying: "Increase and multiply," God alluded to the reason for the institution of marriage, not to any command for entering the married state. No one can be compelled to marry, and the state of virginity is highly recommended as better and more perfect than that of marriage.

The primary reason for the union of two persons is that they may mutually help one another, since each being sustained by the other they are in a better position to bear the trials of life and the weakness of old age.

The second reason for the institution of marriage was the need to propagate the race, not only in order to have heirs to property on earth, but to leave behind members of the true faith.

The third reason for the institution of marriage was to enable those who will not resist the desires of the flesh to avoid the sin of impurity.

Every one who intends to marry should reflect upon these three reasons.

Hitherto I have spoken of marriage as a natural union, but when it is considered as a Sacrament, we shall see that it has a higher aim, viz., the birth of Christians to serve the true God. The Church has always taught that matrimony is a Sacrament, and in so doing she relies on St. Paul's words: "Men ought to love their wives as their own bodies. . . . Marriage is a great Sacrament, but I speak in Christ and in the Church" (Eph., v, 28, 32). The Apostle compares the husband with Christ, and the wife with the Church, and says that the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ is the head of the Church, therefore a husband must love and honor his wife, and a wife her husband.

That through this Sacrament also the grace of God is indicated and communicated appears from the words of the Council of Trent: "The grace which ought to perfect natural love, to strengthen the indissoluble union, and to sanctify married people was purchased for us by Christ, the Founder of all Sacraments, at the cost of His life."

Through the holy Sacrament of Matrimony three benefits are acquired, viz., children, fidelity and the indissoluble marriage bond.

Children born of a lawful wife are a blessing. St. Paul says that a woman shall be saved through child-bearing, but this does not refer simply to bringing children into the world, but to training them in the fear of the Lord, for the Apostle adds: "If she continue in faith and love and sanctification" (1 Tim., ii, 15).

The second blessing is the fidelity with which husband and wife cling to one another, each acknowledging the other's rights and authority and promising never to be false to the marriage bond. Hence our Lord said: "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they two shall be in one flesh" (Matt., xix, 5).

The third blessing is the indissoluble marriage bond of which St. Paul says: "The Lord commandeth that the wife depart not from her husband. . . and let not the husband put away his wife" (1 Cor., vii, 10, 11).

The best preparation for a happy marriage consists in a full realization of the objects for which this state was instituted. The marriage bond is in itself holy, and it is intended to be the foundation of the temporal and eternal happiness both of the married couple and their children, and also to promote the welfare of the Church and State. This is the object aimed at by all natural and divine laws regarding marriage. It is impossible of attainment if the requisite knowledge, qualities and capabilities are lacking, hence it is most necessary for all who think of entering the married state to know what it involves, and to acquire composure, moderation, frankness, kindly sympathy, cheerfulness and endurance, so as to avoid mistakes and faults that might mar their own and their partner's happiness. They should learn how to be bright and contented in daily life so as to dispel any clouds that may arise in their home and not to succumb to any storms and trials. Before marriage it is highly important to learn a good deal about the bringing up of children; not only how to feed and care for their bodies, but also how to train and develop their hearts and minds. It is important, too, to calculate whether the income will suffice to support a family, so that the children may not suffer want or be cast upon the community. In

short, before two people are married, it is their duty to know what is required of good parents, worthy citizens, and true Christians.

Yet such a preparation is not in itself enough to insure a happy marriage, since happiness does not depend only upon one partner, but upon both jointly. What serious consideration and how much care should be shown in the choice of a partner for life! No one ought to rely altogether upon his own judgment in this matter, and he will do well to consult people older and wiser than himself, and as even the wisests of mortals are liable to make mistakes, and as God alone knows the secrets of the heart, it is most advisable to beg Him for assistance and counsel.

Therefore the man who desires to marry should begin by training himself, carefully selecting his future wife, consulting prudent people, and praying earnestly for guidance.

37. Matrimony. (*Continued*)

When the bridal couple and their two witnesses come to be married, the priest asks the people present whether they know of any impediment to this union. If none is mentioned, he addreses an exhortation to the couple, reminding them (a) of the sanctity of the marriage state, which was instituted by God, and raised by Christ to the rank of a Sacrament; (b) of the heavy responsibility incurred by parents with regard to the Christian education of their children; (c) of the duty of fidelity toward one another, and (d) of the indissoluble character of marriage.

After this exhortation the priest invites all present to pray; then he asks the couple whether they will consent to the marriage, and after each has answered: "I will," he joins their hands and calls upon them solemnly to promise life-long loyalty to one another. Putting his stole over their hands, he says: "I join you together in

marriage, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen." Turning to the altar he begs God to give His blessing to the newly married couple.

For a marriage to be lawful, it is necessary that there should be no impediment to it arising out of any natural, divine or ecclesiastical law. There are two kinds of impediments to marriage. No one can be married if the Church forbids it, if he has taken simple vows, or if the marriage is to take place at a forbidden time of year. The above are impediments of the less serious kind. Other impediments are of the class called diriment, and are so serious that, even if the marriage ceremony has taken place, it is invalid. Such impediments occur where a tie of consanguinity or affinity is found to exist between the two persons, where one of them is bound by a solemn vow of chastity, or has never been baptized, or where the marriage has been contracted secretly, or consent extorted under compulsion. In all these cases the Church has to decide whether the impediment is such as to make marriage impossible, or, should it already have taken place, whether it can be validated. Mixed marriages are permitted only when the non-Catholic party promises to allow the children to be brought up in the Catholic religion.

You see, my brethren, how important a Sacrament matrimony is, and how the orderly propagation of the human race and the permanence of the Church depend upon it. It involves many serious obligations, and where they are neglected, misery will result in time and in eternity. Therefore I wish to warn all who are still single not to rush hastily into marriage, but to prepare themselves carefully beforehand, to choose their partner cautiously, and, above all, to pray for God's guidance in this important matter. Those who are already married should frequently consider the obligations that they

have incurred and strive to fulfil them, that thus they may be happy and contented in the married state.

38. The Benedictions Given By the Church

The Church's teaching on the subject of ecclesiastical blessings is very important, as people are apt to fall into two disastrous errors regarding them. Some treat blessed things with superstitious reverence and seem to fancy that Satan exercises an arbitrary power over men, which can be averted only by having recourse to things blessed by a priest. Thus during a severe thunderstorm such people fancy that they will not be safe from the devil unless they have some blessed object about them. They forget that it is God who in His wisdom and power directs the tempest, and that Jesus Christ has triumphed over the powers of evil. Others rely on blessed medals and expect them to work miracles in times of pestilence. Others use them for the purpose of discovering treasures or adding to their worldly possessions and overlook the fact that religion does not exist in order to further their temporal interests. Others again think that a diligent use of blessed objects will make up for their want of true penance and purpose of amendment. This is a complete distortion of their proper employment, and all who fall into the errors that I have just mentioned are guilty of superstition.

There are, on the other hand, many who fall into the contrary fault of unbelief and reject all ecclesiastical blessings, refuse to use blessed objects, and ridicule the Church and the priesthood for allowing their use, or even go so far as to accuse them of making money out of their right to bless.

The truth obviously lies midway between superstition and unbelief, and we shall do well to consider carefully what the Church really teaches.

There are two kinds of blessings given by the Church; to the first class belong all religious ceremonies which set apart some person for a spiritual office, or something for use in the service of God. These blessings are also called consecrations, and are given to priests, altars and churches. To the second class belong religious acts whereby God's blessing and help are sought on behalf of a person or thing.

The benedictions used in the Church are of remote antiquity. In the Old Testament we read that Melchisedech blessed Abraham, Isaac blessed Jacob, and Moses the people of Israel. Similar instances occur in the New Testament; Simeon blessed Mary and Joseph, and Jesus blessed the children brought to Him. We are also told that He blessed loaves and fishes. In blessing any object the Church has no intention of modifying its natural properties, but of symbolically representing to us certain virtues that we ought to acquire. For instance, holy water is a symbol of purity of heart. Nor does the Church wish to encourage us to neglect our duties, but rather to spur us on to fulfil them. For instance, when she gives us blessed ashes, she invites us to do penance and correct our faults. Nor does she suggest that we should dispense with the ordinary means of grace prescribed by God, but use them with greater confidence in Him. Nor has she any idea of promoting our worldly interests, but she seeks to increase our virtue and happiness by giving us God's blessing on our temporal affairs.

The fact that the Church blesses certain things should inspire us with a desire to praise our Creator, to rely with childlike confidence on His fatherly kindness, to acknowledge our dependence on Him, and to be active in good works and the discharge of all our duties.

The ordinary ceremonies attending blessings and consecrations

are: the sign of the Cross, sprinkling with holy water, incensing and anointing. When she uses the sign of the Cross, the Church reminds us that mankind, having once fallen into sin, can participate in God's blessing only through Christ's death on the Cross. This sacred sign should arouse within us great confidence in the infinite merits of Jesus Christ. When she sprinkles anything with holy water, the Church suggests that, in order to obtain God's blessing, we must have hearts free from sin. Incense is a type of prayer which should rise to Heaven from a pure and loving heart, just as the fragrant smoke rises from the glowing coals. Anointing with oil indicates the beneficent action of the Holy Ghost whose grace is sought from God.

In short, the blessings are intercessory prayers offered by priests or bishops, and accompanied by some external action or sign. They are intended to promote virtue and piety, and their efficacy depends partly on God's mercy and goodness, and partly on our worthiness. If we understand the origin, purpose and effect of the blessings given by the Church, we shall esteem them as they deserve, and use them for our own good.

39. Prayer (*in General*)

One of the most powerful means of attaining to virtue and salvation is prayer. It is emphatically recommended by our Lord and His Apostles, and by all the fathers and doctors of the Church in every age. St. Augustine says: "He that prayeth well, liveth well." Convinced of the necessity and advantage of prayer, holy Church urges us incessantly to practice it.

Nevertheless there are many Christians who seldom or never pray, or, if they pray, do not grow in goodness and piety. Why is this? Either because they do not understand what prayer is, or

because they pray without the right dispositions, or because they fail to recognize the importance of prayer. Consequently it is no wonder that their prayer is ineffectual.

The right dispositions for prayer are aroused in our hearts by a vivid remembrance of God's power, goodness and wisdom, and right dispositions find expression in holy desires and resolutions, and this is prayer. Prayer is the raising up of the mind and heart to God, by thinking of Him, by adoring, praising and thanking Him, and by begging of Him all blessings for soul and body. When we use a set form of words, we make vocal prayer; when we speak to God silently in our hearts, we make mental prayer. Prayer can be offered with the heart alone, but never only with the lips; for the disposition of the heart is the chief thing in prayer, the movement of the lips, the utterance of certain words and the attitude of the body are of merely secondary importance, although they are good, as aids to real prayer.

There are unhappily many false ideas current on the subject of prayer.

1. Some people mistake the thoughtless repetition of a form of words for prayer, whereas it is only lip-service.

2. Others regard prayer as a burdensome duty required of us by God for His own gratification.

3. Others think that all prayer is the asking for some favor, whereas this is only the prayer of supplication, and not prayer in general.

4. Others again fancy that they will be saved if they say many prayers, and have no need to cooperate in the work of their salvation.

You see, by brethren, that there are many mistaken ideas about

prayer, and we, who know what prayer really is, should be on our guard against them. Let us resolve never to pray without thinking of God, and putting ourselves in the right disposition, and always to pray in the manner taught by our divine Lord.

40. The Necessity and Advantage of Prayer

This subject may be considered in three aspects: Prayer is necessary (1) to place the soul in the state of grace, (2) to preserve the soul in that state, (3) to enable us to meet death in that state. Thus prayer is necessary (1) for sinners, (2) for the just, and (3) for both alike.

1. The necessity of prayer is an article of faith. Man with all his faculties can do nothing towards ensuring his salvation and, having once fallen into sin, he cannot extricate himself from it, without the aid of supernatural grace. This has always been the doctrine of the Church. St. Augustine says: "We believe that none can attain salvation, unless called by God; and that no one, even if called by God, can work out his salvation without God's assistance; and that no one receives this divine assistance who does not ask for it." Hence, I implore you all to turn to God and beseech Him to help you.

2. Although a just man may believe himself to be in the grace of God, he should never forget St. Paul's warning: "Let him that thinketh himself to stand, take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor., x, 12), for, as our Saviour said: "The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matth., xxvi, 41). Our weakness exposes us to many violent temptations, and to still worse enemies, for, as St. Paul says, "our wrestling is not against flesh and blood, but against the spirits of wickedness in high places" (Eph., vi, 12). St. Peter, too, tells us that our "adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goeth about seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter, v, 8).

Innumerable crafty foes beset us on all sides, trying, now by open violence, now by secret suggestions, to rob us of the priceless treasure of sanctifying grace. Whence shall we derive strength to

withstand them? Prayer alone will protect us against their assaults, bring down upon us God's mercy, and open to us the storehouse of supernatural graces. No just man can remain long in the state of grace without prayer, and still less can he be sure of dying in that state.

3. The grace of a happy death is one of the greatest boons that God in His mercy can give us. It is true that righteousness of life is the best and surest preparation for a happy death, but it is also true that no one can continue good and virtuous to the end unless God bestows on him the special grace of perseverance in well-doing. Although we cannot actually merit this precious gift, we must at least evince some desire to receive it, and this we do by means of prayer. Christ bids us watch and pray, pray without ceasing; therefore, let us pray for a happy death, praying with confidence and hope, since prayer is no less efficacious than merit.

There can be no doubt of the necessity of prayer both in life and at death; now let us consider its advantages.

When we utter a prayer of praise, we think of God's perfections, and look upon Him as the model for our imitation and as the most powerful stimulus for our will. Our faith gains strength, our hope assurance, and our charity is inflamed. When we utter a prayer of thanksgiving, we remember the innumerable graces and benefits that we have received from God, and are encouraged to do His will more zealously, to be more charitable towards our neighbors, and to be more careful not to waste or misuse His gifts. When we utter a prayer of supplication, we increase our hope and confidence in God, and our own humility; we make good resolutions, and our good dispositions render us worthy of God's favor, since He leaves nothing unrewarded.

When we pray for ourselves we practise humility and confidence,

and when we pray for others we perform an act of charity towards our neighbor, we think of God as the Father of all mankind and we recall the needs and sorrows of our fellow men. In this way our charity is increased and we are more disposed to exert ourselves for the benefit of the afflicted. When we pray for the departed, we think of their misery in purgatory, and this thought makes us shrink even from venial sins and impels us to expiate, if possible in this life, any grievous sins that we may have committed. Moreover, prayer for the dead suggests the performance of other good words on their behalf, and it also makes us more careful to do our duty towards our friends who are still alive, lest any of them should have to suffer in purgatory for sins that we have caused them to commit. We become more careful to correct in ourselves the faults for which the departed are now paying the penalty, so that in many ways intercessory prayer for others promotes our own growth in virtue. Since, then, prayer is indispensable for the acquisition and preservation of grace, we ought to pray daily, and many times each day. Thus we shall grow in virtue, provided we pray frequently in the way taught by Christ and the Apostles.

41. The Qualities of Prayer

If our prayer is to be good, we must be good, and not sinful, for Holy Scripture tells us that God does not listen to impenitent sinners. King Antiochus prayed, but found no mercy with God on account of his crimes. The Pharisees prayed very often, but they were not heard, because they were hypocrites. How could such a sinner expect God to hear him? Prayer is a conversation between friends, and, when we pray, we take all our cares and interests to God; our Almighty Friend, and hope to receive from Him mercy and help. But a sinner is God's enemy, not his friend, and so he cannot expect that

God will listen to him. How, for instance, could a proud man hope to be heard, when he knows that God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble? A miser need not expect to be heard as long as his heart clings to nothing but his worldly goods. Only the servants of God are heard, and it is impossible for a man to serve both God and Mammon. An impure man will not be heard, for though St. Paul says all ought to pray, he also says that the hands raised to Heaven should be clean, that is to say, not hands stained with lust and vice. An envious man will not be heard. He desires God to make him happy, but he is vexed when his neighbor prospers. He wants God to love him, but not others—hence he cannot hope to be heard, for we read in the Gospel: "With what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." In short, no impenitent sinner can possibly expect God to hear him.

For prayer to be good, however, it is not enough that the person praying is not a sinner,—he must practice virtue. I do not mean that no fault can be imputed to him, but that he possesses Christian justice, and is seeking to avoid evil and do good. That such justice is requisite is stated plainly in Holy Scripture, where we read: "Prayer is good with fasting and alms," *i. e.*, when accompanied with good works. Whoever wishes to be heard by God, must be pleasing to Him, and none but the just can find favor in His sight. Therefore, my brethren, examine your prayer, examine yourselves and ascertain whether you are just or not, whether you deserve to be heard or rejected.

Further, for prayer to be good, we must ask for what is good, *i. e.*, for something that truly promotes our temporal and eternal happiness. Sometimes, however, we are at a loss to know what will do this, and we feel inclined to say, like the disciples of old: "Lord, teach us to pray." But our Lord has already done this, for He said: "Thus

shall you pray—"Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name." The Paternoster contains all for which we ought to pray. You repeat it very often, but do you realize what it contains and what you ask? Or, if you realize it, do you think what you are saying?

Thirdly, if prayer is to be good, it must be offered with devotion and confidence. We pray devoutly when we pray with the spirit, and with attention, not giving way to distractions or careless indifference, but showing zeal, reverence and humility. The saints have always prayed thus, but can we say that we pray with attention, zeal and devotion? Are not our prayers often characterized by carelessness and indifference? Do we not give way to distractions? Many people behave in church as if they were at a fair, talking, gossiping and slandering their neighbors. The house of God is a house of prayer, but by their bad behavior they make it a den of thieves. Some even go so far as to regard God's house as a place for seeing and being seen; they go to the sanctuary only in order to defile it. Others behave with outward decorum in church, but though they are present in body, their thoughts are elsewhere, and their prayers, being devoid of all true devotion, have no claim to be heard by God.

But even if we pray with devotion, have we always the necessary confidence that God will hear us? Prayer is imperfect, if faith and confidence are lacking. We often hear people say: "I have prayed so often for release from my misery; I have asked God to take away my cross and deliver me from my troubles, but He does not hear me. I have begged for wealth, and I am still poor; I have prayed for health, and I am still sick; I have asked for happiness and prosperity, and I am always in distress." When people complain thus, I say to them: "How do you know that you have prayed enough? Are you

sure that it would have been for your good, if God had granted your request? Is it not possible that riches would have made you effeminate, good health would have rendered you vicious, and prosperity arrogant? If you had had no cross to bear, you might have forgotten God; happiness here might have involved the loss of your soul. Bear your cross with patience and continue to pray with confidence."

I have shown you what qualities prayer should have. The person who prays must be good, so you should abandon sin and begin to do the works of Christian justice. What you ask must be good. So pray for your temporal and eternal welfare; and pray with devotion and confidence, for otherwise your prayer will not be offered in the right way. Take our Lord and the saints as your models in prayer, and then you will always pray aright.

42. The Objects of Prayer

The mind and soul are undoubtedly far superior to the body, therefore we ought to ask God chiefly for what will benefit our souls and further our salvation, especially as these favors can be obtained from Him alone.

The first thing absolutely indispensable to the human soul is God's grace, which is to the soul what life is to the body; without it we are nothing, and with it we can do all things. Grace is a light on our path to our heavenly home, and it also guides us thither; without it the soul is dead and salvation impossible; therefore grace is the first and greatest blessing that we ought to ask of the Father of Light.

No less important is perfect faith in God's teaching and commandments, since without faith we cannot please God. Faith should not be only in our heart but it must influence our life, and make us ready

to obey God's law and submit in all things to His holy will, in accordance with which we should order all our actions. Faith is the gift of God and not of man, hence we should beg Him for this true, active faith, which we cannot merit for ourselves. David perceived the necessity of such prayer, and besought God not only to show him the way of His commandments, but also to give him strength to obey them.

We are so apt to go astray that we all need strength and steadfastness. Our own tastes and desires are hindrances to our observance of God's law, our passions incline us to rebel against His will, and even if the spirit is ready to obey, the flesh resists. How all-important it is for us to pray that God will give us strength and courage in time of temptation, so that we may overcome ourselves and our passions, and triumph in our struggle against sin! Our divine Lord Himself taught us the necessity of such prayers, for He told His disciples to pray that God would not lead them into temptation, but would deliver them from evil, *i. e.*, sin. St. Paul sets us a noble example of prayer for victory over sin, temptation and self; his constant prayer was that the temptations might be removed, or else that God would give him strength to withstand them.

As, however, sin frequently prevails, and involves the death and destruction of the soul, a sinner can ask for nothing more necessary than forgiveness and strength to rise up and resist sin in future. Therefore we say:

"Forgive us our trespasses."

You see then that the most important things for which we can pray, since they conduce to our eternal salvation, are God's grace, faith, obedience to God's law, victory over temptations, and forgiveness for sins. We are, however, by no means forbidden to ask for temporal favors. Our Lord taught us to pray for food and

for whatever is necessary to our bodily life—"Give us this day our daily bread." Moreover, He who allows us to pray for things to supply the wants of the body, cannot possibly forbid us to pray also for the temporal advantages for the mind, and therefore we may beseech Him to give us understanding, wisdom and knowledge. "I prayed," says the sage, "and the spirit of wisdom was bestowed upon me."

When they pray, many Christians have no regard for order and proportion, and thus frustrate the granting of their requests. Some are so careless and indifferent to their soul's welfare that they take no pains to follow the way of salvation, and do not think it worth while to ask God for His all-powerful grace, for the light of faith, for perseverance or for courage to withstand temptation; they do not even pray for forgiveness of their sins, but are so completely engrossed in worldly matters that all their requests are for earthly things. They ask for prosperity, for promotion to some desired position, for good health, and sometimes the real motives prompting their prayers are absolutely sinful, *e. g.*, a desire for revenge, a wish to gratify their fleshly lusts, or uncharitable feelings towards their neighbor. Seldom or never do they give a thought to their own salvation or that of others. They are ready enough to pray when a thunderstorm threatens to destroy their crops, but they do not pray when temptation threatens to overcome their innocence and virtue, or to bring ruin and death upon their relatives. They pray fast enough when the body is assailed by disease and pain, but they are unmoved when sin and its consequences fall upon the soul. They turn to God when a hostile army devastates the land, but they look on with cold indifference when the enemies of faith and religion go about spreading their fatal doctrines, and when immorality abounds.

Our divine Lord taught us to seek first the Kingdom of God and

His justice, to attend first to what affects the soul, and then in the second place to ask for temporal favors and to ask for them only with moderation and to supply genuine needs. We should pray first for the temporal and eternal welfare of our souls. If we ask God for what is really good, and ask it in the name of Jesus Christ, we shall not ask in vain, for whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in the name of His beloved Son, He will give you.

43. The Lord's Prayer

Our divine Lord composed a prayer to show us how and for what we ought to pray. When His disciples asked Him for instruction on the subject, He replied, "Thus shall you pray: Our Father who art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us. And lead us not into tempeation, but deliver us from evil. Amen." This is called the Lord's Prayer, because our Lord Himself taught it to His disciples; we sometimes speak of it as the Pater Noster or the Our Father, from the first two words.

It consists of an invocation and seven petitions. The former is: *Our Father, who art in Heaven.* The word *Father* reminds us that God is our Father, more loving and reverend than any earthly father, and that therefore we should pray to Him with childlike love, reverence and confidence. We say *our* Father, because He is the Father of all mankind, and we are all brethren bound to love and pray for one another. The words *who art in Heaven* should remind us (1) that God, though present everywhere, dwells in a special manner in Heaven, where we shall one day behold Him face to face; (2) that we are pilgrims here on earth, and that our true home is in

Heaven; (3) that in prayer we should raise our hearts from earth to Heaven.

The first petition is *Hallowed be Thy name.* This is a prayer that God's name may never be dishonored or taken in vain, but that we and all mankind may know, love and revere Him.

The second petition is: *Thy Kingdom come.* We pray (1) that God's Kingdom on earth, viz., the holy Catholic Church, may spread over the whole world; (2) that divine grace and love may reign supreme in our hearts; and (3) that after this life we may be admitted to the Kingdom of Heaven.

The third petition is: *Thy will be done on earth, as it is in Heaven.* We pray that we and all mankind may do God's will on earth with as much joyful fidelity as the angels and saints in Heaven, and that we may submit in all things to what God ordains.

The fourth petition is: *Give us this day our daily bread.* We beseech God to give us all that is needful both for our souls and bodies.

The fifth petition is: *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us.* We ask pardon for our own sins, promising at the same time willingly to forgive those who injure us.

The sixth petition is: *Lead us not into temptation.* We beg God to avert from us all the assaults of evil, or to give us strength to resist them. Temptation proceeds partly from our own corrupt nature and fleshly desires, partly from the world, with its vain splendor, evil examples and false principles, and partly from the evil suggestions of the devil. No man is free from temptation, for even Christ was tempted, and in order that we may not yield to it, we must follow His example of vigilance and prayer.

The seventh petition is: *But deliver us from evil.* We pray God to protect us from all evil both in soul and body, especially from sin and eternal damnation, and to bring to us the joys of Heaven. The

concluding word, *Amen*, expresses our ardent desire that God will hear and grant our requests. No prayer is so beautiful, so easy, or so good as the Lord's Prayer. It is beautiful, because it contains petitions for the greatest benefits, instructions for our guidance, and consolation for our troubles. It is easy, because it consists of seven short petitions that any one can understand and learn by heart. It is the best of all prayers, because it teaches us (1) in all that we do, to aim only at the glory of God; (2) to strive after truth, virtue and salvation; (3) to bring our will into conformity with God's will; (4) to be content with little; (5) to do penance for sin; (6) to forgive our enemies; (7) to shun and resist temptation; and (8) to avoid all sin, and place our whole confidence in God.

My brethren, let us never say this beautiful prayer in a hasty and thoughtless manner, but repeat it in the way in which Jesus Himself, both by His word and example, taught us to pray.

44. The Hail Mary

Catholics are in the habit of adding to the Lord's Prayer one addressed to our Lady, called the Ave Maria or Hail Mary. In it we ask the blessed Mother of God to support our feeble prayers with her powerful intercession. The opening words of this prayer are those with which the archangel Gabriel greeted Mary when he came to announce that she was to be the mother of the ardently desired Messiah. The angel said: *Hail Mary, full of grace,* thus indicating that our Lady was full of grace even before her birth, had always grown in grace, and would give birth to the Source of all grace. None but virtuous people are honored and favored by God, and if we are to hope for grace, we too must lead a virtuous life.

The Lord is with thee, God is with our Lady in a very special way; hence she is rightly called the chosen daughter of our Father in Heaven, the mother of the Divine Son, and the spouse of the Holy Ghost. But will not the Lord be with us also? Certainly, if like Mary we do our best to be united with Him. We can accomplish this: (1) by praying earnestly for grace and cooperating faithfully with it; (2) by going to Holy Communion, in which we receive our Lord's most sacred Body and Blood, so that He dwells in us and we in Him; (3) by continually remembering Him, and (4) by attaining to everlasting happiness in Heaven, where with Mary and all the saints we shall behold God face to face and delight in Him forever.

Blessed art thou among women. These words were addressed by St. Elizabeth to our Lady, because she was chosen before all others to be mother of God, at once Virgin and Mother, and also because she removed the curse that Eve, the first woman, brought upon the world.

May our Christian women also find grace and favor with God! They will do so, if the maidens are as innocent, humble and submissive as Mary, and if the married women fulfil their duties with loyalty such as she displayed.

Elizabeth added: *And blessed is the fruit of thy womb.* This fruit was Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who took flesh and blood from Mary's virginal body and was born of her. He is the *blessed* fruit. If we call our Lady blessed, we must with still greater right give the title to her Divine Son and praise Him for having, out of love for us, taken upon Himself our human nature and become our Teacher, Redeemer and Saviour.

To this, the original form of the Hail Mary, the Church has added: *Holy Mary, Mother of God, pray for us sinners now and in the hour of our death. Amen.* The Church addresses our Lady as holy, because Catholics have always believed that she never committed even a venial sin. She is the Mother of God, because her Divine Son, Jesus Christ, is at once God and Man.

We honor Mary as our mother also, and do well frequently to beg for her intercession, since no one can be a more powerful advocate. We are all sinners, all poor in grace, and therefore we need support if our prayers are to be granted, but more than at any other time do we need her intercession at the hour of our death, when we are too weak to pray ourselves.

It is most advisable to pray often for a happy death, since our eternal salvation depends upon our dispositions when we die, our temptations generally increase in severity, and final perseverance is a grace for which we should pray continually.

You see, my brethren, that the Hail Mary contains an offering of praise to Mary, a commemoration of the Incarnation, and a request for intercession during life and at death. As you know

this prayer forms the chief part of the Angelus, that many pious people say in the morning, at noon and at night. Let us be faithful to this pious practice, which gives honor both to our Lord and to His mother.

45. The Rosary

St. Dominic had toiled indefatigably for a long time trying to convert the Albigenses, who denied the doctrines of the Church regarding the Blessed Trinity, the Incarnation, Redemption and Resurrection of our Lord, but very few of the heretics returned to the true faith. Accordingly, in the year 1208 he redoubled his prayers and works of penance, and had recourse to our Lady, imploring her to help him by her powerful intercession in his labors for the salvation of souls. It is a tradition that thereupon the holy Mother of God appeared to the saint and taught him how to say the rosary, by means of which he succeeded in converting thousands of heretics. Afterwards he zealously spread this devotion, which was subsequently approved by the Church.

The chaplet consists of the Apostles' Creed and fifty Hail Mary's divided into groups of ten; the Our Father is said before, and the Sign of the Cross is made after each decade. Whilst saying the Hail Mary's we meditate upon the mystery of our redemption. The complete Rosary consists of fifteen decades, divided into the five joyful, the five sorrowful and the five glorious mysteries. Those who despise the Rosary, despise something they do not understand, for it is impossible to contemplate the arrangement and signification of this venerable devotion without learning to appreciate it. It is a public profession of faith and a means of offering worship to the Blessed Trinity and honor to our Lady. In it we call to mind and meditate upon the holiest and greatest mysteries of our religion. Some people say that the frequent repetition of the same words

becomes wearisome and distasteful, but this is possible only on part of those who either take no delight in prayer or despise our religion. The fact that the prayers are counted on a chain of beads does not detract from the value of the devotion; the beads only serve the purpose of making it easier to count the Hail Mary's.

The name Rosary has been given to this form of prayer, because each Hail Mary resembles a flower in the garland offered to the Queen of Heaven, whom the Church addresses as *Rosa Mystica*, the mystical Rose. A rose has green leaves, sharp thorns and blossoms; the green leaves typify the joyful, the thorns the sorrowful, and the blossoms the glorious mysteries.

That the Rosary is a devotion pleasing and acceptable to God, and of great efficacy, was shown plainly on the occasion of its introduction by St. Dominic, and, since then, in many times of danger and distress. The Church encourages its use and has encircled it with many indulgences that can be gained by all who say the Rosary in a spirit of penance, being at the time in the state of grace.

Let us not listen to those who ridicule our religion and its beautiful practices, but say the Rosary often and with devout attention, meditating on each mystery and offering the whole prayer to God according to the spirit and intention of Holy Church. In this way we shall certainly experience the benefits to be derived from it.

46. Public Prayer

By His use of the plural rather than the singular in urging the necessity of prayer, our Lord seems to insist upon the advantages of prayer offered in common. It has indeed far greater efficacy than private prayer. It is not the utterance of a single voice, but the appeal of many voices in unison. The sight of the devotion of others kindles the fervor of the individual, and through the union of many

hearts and wills the expression and force of prayer gains strength. Moreover, in virtue of the Communion of Saints, public prayer does more good and is more meritorious than private prayer, and a more abundant blessing rests upon it. Why is public prayer better? Because it rises above personalities and the restricted needs and wishes of individuals; and our hearts expand as we pray for and strive to help one another.

Consequently public prayer runs less risk of being selfish and self-centered, for it is directed towards the welfare of all men and God's glory. It promotes the spirit of charity, for in it self-love gives way to love of our neighbor, whose interests we make our own. We do not pray, "Hear me," "Spare me," but, "Hear us," "Spare us," showing that we desire all the faithful to be heard, spared and saved.

Moreover public prayer is peculiarly pleasing to God, as in it we all collectively worship and honor Him. The Our Father from beginning to end breathes the spirit of united prayer.

A special blessing is promised to public prayer, and in Holy Scripture and Church History we find many instances of such prayer being heard. At times of pestilence or calamity the Israelites all united in prayer to God, and often were miraculously delivered from the dangers threatening them. Similar events are recorded in the History of the Church, and we know by our own experience what can be effected by public prayer in seasons of distress. Our Lord Himself assures us that such prayer never remains unanswered, for He says: "If two of you shall consent upon earth concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father who is in Heaven. For where there are two or three gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them." I am far from wishing to deter you from private prayer, in fact

I want to urge you never to omit it . But, because you pray alone, you should not hold aloof from public prayer, for I have shown you how good and efficacious it is, besides being most pleasing to God. Make it your delight therefore to join with others in prayer, partly for God's glory, and partly for your own and their welfare.

47. Religious Customs and Ceremonies

Every religious person feels impelled to express his religious sentiments by words and outward signs, and our divine Saviour Himself was no exception to this rule. He taught His disciples the Our Father, a vocal prayer; He prayed kneeling, with uplifted hands, and He instituted the Sacraments, each of which is administered under an outward sign. For this reason the Catholic Church has laid down certain rules for the fit expression of our religious feelings, and these ceremonies or customs have a two-fold advantage. They quicken and strengthen our religious sentiments, for our love for God gains additional force, when the tongue gives utterance to the feelings of the heart. Moreover outward manifestations of religion arouse pious feelings in those around us. Whoever has taken part in a fervent act of worship in the house of God, will know how much his own devotion has been stimulated by that of others.

In the Old Testament we read of many ceremonies connected with the worship of God, and in the New Testament there is mention of special observances at prayer, at the administration of the Sacraments, etc.

Prayer is itself a ceremony, and our Lord taught His followers to pray. The apostles did the same, and soon prayers of various kinds were composed and used in the Church. Before and after praying a Catholic makes the Sign of the Cross, in memory of our

divine Lord, who in His love for us endured death on the cross, to redeem us from sin and everlasting death. We assume also particular attitudes at prayer; we stand, kneel, bow down, fold our hands, strike our breast, stretch out or hold up our arms, etc. No good Catholic neglects these customs, and we must be careful not to imitate those who display such indifference that one would hardly think them aware that they are in church.

In itself one day resembles another, and every place, time and action serves for the worship of God. The life of one who loves God is a perpetual festival, as all his actions are done in God's sight and for His glory. Yet the Church has set aside certain days, places and things and consecrated them to the service of God, so that we regard them as holy.

On Sundays and holy days every Catholic has to observe the custom of the Church and hear holy Mass.

In Advent and Lent, at Christmas, New Year, Epiphany, Easter and Pentecost, as well as on festivals of our Lord and our Lady, some of the saints and All Souls' day, there are various ceremonies or customs ordered by the Church with a view to giving honor to God, and benefiting the souls of men.

We Catholics have two places devoted exclusively to religious observances, viz., our churches and our cemeteries. Both are holy; in the churches God dwells hidden, and we pray and offer sacrifice to Him, and in our cemeteries rest the bodies of our departed brethren. Certain ceremonies are performed in both from time to time, and as Christians we ought to reverence these places.

Among holy things that we treat with respect are relics, pictures of saints and crucifixes. A certain ceremonial use is made of all these things, and it serves to remind us of the saints and encourage us to follow their examples. This use is neither so superfluous

nor so injurious as non-Catholics are apt to suppose, and the veneration of relics, etc. tends to our edification and sanctification. There are ceremonies connected with processions, pilgrimages and confraternities, of which I shall speak another day, and I have already alluded to the ritual accompanying the administration of the various Sacraments. All the actions and the customs prescribed by the Church are full of significance, and we should never neglect these means of grace, but practice them in loyal obedience to her. Thus they will have a beneficial effect upon us, and the end for which they were instituted will be attained.

48. Processions

From the very earliest times the Church has ordered processions to take place as a means of promoting piety, of thanks for favors received, or of imploring God's assistance. We read in the Old Testament of processions. King David solemnly escorted the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, and his son Solomon transferred it with similar display of reverence to the newly built Temple. Our Divine Lord made a solemn entrance into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, amidst cries of exultation on part of the populace.

(1) Processions give much encouragement to fervent prayer. When hundreds or thousands unite in singing the praises of God, or in beseeching His help and mercy, some amount of zeal and devotion is awakened even in the coldest hearts. (2) Processions are a type of our pilgrimage through this world. We are but strangers here below, and our way to our Heavenly home passes through a vale of tears. Consequently our procession is made in the open air, where we are exposed to bad weather and other discomforts, and it ends in the house of God. (3) By taking part in a procession we proclaim that love, gratitude and reverence are due to almighty God, and we publicly acknowledge ourselves to be members of the one holy Catholic Church. (4) Lastly, a procession signifies the triumph of Christianity over the errors and darkness of paganism. Crucifixes and banners are generally carried in a procession. The former indicate that we are Christians, assembled in the name of our crucified Saviour, through whose merits we hope to obtain from our Heavenly Father the favors that we ask. We profess our readiness to follow Him throughout our journey to Heaven.

White banners denote Christ's triumph over death and hell, and the victory of Christianity over Judaism and paganism.

Red banners show that we must fight bravely under Christ's standard against sin, the world and the devil, and be ready, like the martyrs, to give up property and life itself for the sake of our faith. Blue banners suggest that we ought to tread the path of mortification and self-denial with humble and contrite hearts.

The processions best known in this country are the processions in Holy Week, the Holy Name procession, and the procession on the Feast of Corpus Christi. After this feast was instituted, in order to celebrate it with all possible solemnity, it became usual to carry the Blessed Sacrament through the streets and to sing the Gospel at four halting-places during the procession. This custom has been observed for over 300 years. Since, however, such processions through the streets are not usually feasible in this country they are usually held within the church or the churchyard. It gives us an opportunity publicly to profess our faith in the most holy Sacrament of the Altar, to show our veneration and love for our Divine Lord, to make reparation for the insults offered Him in this holy Sacrament, to increase devotion to it, and to thank Him for His unspeakable love in instituting it, and in bestowing upon us the infinite benefits of Holy Communion.

Whoever takes part in processions of this kind ought to do so with the intention of glorifying God, of thanking Him for all His goodness, and of beseeching His help in all bodily and spiritual necessities. Further, he must intend to make public profession of the Catholic faith, and of his willingness to follow our crucified Saviour on the way of penance and mortification. If you take part in processions with such dispositions, you will find by experience that you have not done so in vain.

49. Pilgrimages

A pilgrimage is a visit made to a sacred place for the purpose of performing there some particular devotions. We all feel an instinctive desire to visit places connected with events affecting our temporal or eternal welfare, and by visiting them we renew our remembrance of these occurrences and awaken in our hearts a sense of gratitude for benefits bestowed and of admiration for the virtues of those in whose honor the pilgrimage is undertaken. In the history of all religions we read of pilgrimages, and although some of those made by non-Christians appear to be the outcome of a false conception of God, their universality points to the existence, in the depths of human nature, of a deep underlying reason for them. Christian pilgrimages bear the same relation to heathen and Mahommedan pilgrimages as the Christian revelation bears to the religious doctrines of paganism and Islam. The Catholic Church teaches that God is a spirit, present equally in every place, so that we can everywhere find Him, pray to Him and be heard by Him. Man, however, is not a pure spirit, but dependent on the impressions of the world around him, and therefore, although God is equally near us in every place, there are certain localities where we can approach Him more closely, not indeed in body, but in mind, and by means of prayer, penance and good resolutions we can there enter into a peculiarly intimate and beneficial union with God.

In the early Church, pilgrimages were made chiefly to the Holy Places in Palestine, and this was especially the case after Constantine the Great put an end to the persecution of Christians, gave them religious liberty, and, in conjunction with his mother, St. Helena, repaired the Holy Sepulchre and other places in Jeru-

salem. Pilgrims flocked to the Holy Land from every part of Christendom, and after the conquest of Palestine by the Arabs in the seventh century, Charlemagne concluded a treaty with them in which he safeguarded the pilgrims, and he also established a religious house in Jerusalem for their comfort. Their passionate desire to visit the Holy Land continued to drive innumerable Christians thither, in spite of the brutal treatment that they received from the Saracens and the desecration of the holy places. By the end of the eleventh century the enthusiasm of the Western nations reached such a pitch that the pilgrims formed armed bands and went forth with the intention of expelling the unbelievers from Jerusalem, insuring liberty and safety for Christians there, and testifying their own love and gratitude to our Divine Redeemer in the very place where He died for the entire human race.

Intense reverence for the Holy Land and lively faith in our Saviour were therefore the two chief reasons for pilgrimages to Jerusalem, and a similar spirit of reverence for God's chosen agents has in every age caused men to visit the graves and relics of Apostles, martyrs and confessors. We hear of such pilgrimages taking place as early as the end of the third century. The tombs of St. Peter and St. Paul in Rome attracted pilgrims without number, but every kingdom and province had its own particular shrine. Thus in Selencia it was the tomb of St. Thekla, at Hippo the relics of St. Stephen, in Cappadocia the graves of the forty martyrs, and in Gaul the shrine of St. Martin. In countries to which Christianity penetrated only at a later date, the tomb of the apostle of that country, or the church that he had built, was usually a place of pilgrimage. At the present day most pilgrimages are made to churches dedicated to our Lady, and in almost every country there is a shrine where undeniable miracles have been wrought at her

intercession, and for centuries the faithful of every rank in life have thronged thither. Thus there are famous shrines at Montserrat in Spain, at Loretto in Italy, at Lourdes in France, at Einsiedeln in Switzerland, and at Kevelaer in Germany. There may occasionally have been abuses connected with pilgrimages, but we are not therefore justified in speaking contemptuously of them or in wishing to abolish them. Everything in the world is liable to abuse, and no one can deny that it is very edifying to see a vast multitude of every age and position joining with heart and soul in prayer to God. No one can look on unmoved when old men and children, men and women unite in imploring their heavenly Father to give them His blessing. It is a touching sight to behold all the inhabitants of a village or town assemble at the church, and thence proceed, praying as they walk, to some distant shrine. A pilgrimage is essentially an occasion for public prayer; each pilgrim prays with the utmost fervor, encouraging and being encouraged by the devotion of others. The lukewarm and indifferent are carried away by the religious ardor of those around them, and all alike do their part to make the procession edifying and to intensify the collective devotion.

Prayer of this kind is addressed especially to God, our Heavenly Father. We all have one God, one Father, one Lord and one faith, and our almighty Father is ready to help us all, if only we are willing to accept His aid. He is pleased when we pray with confidence, and turn to Him in all our troubles and necessities. We ought to beseech His blessing, each praying for all, and all for each. Let us ask Him to bless our fields, our rulers, and our fellow men. If we pray thus whenever we make a pilgrimage, we shall assuredly not find that it has been made in vain.

50. Confraternities and Guilds

Guilds originated very simply and naturally in the Catholic Church. They are the outcome of the abundant and inexhaustible energy and life that she possesses and imparts to every sound member of her body, though, from another point of view, they may be evidence of spiritual poverty and lack of vigor. In civil life in periods both of general prosperity and of want, men form associations of various kinds, partly in order to enjoy more fully the blessings of peace, and partly to avert the evils of war or other disasters. Similarly our guilds and confraternities date from periods when faith was peculiarly strong or else from those when it was peculiarly weak. Yet the same Catholic spirit and the deep, living impetus of the true faith are present in both cases.

The spirit that leads men to found confraternities is the same as that which in the early days of Christianity peopled the deserts with hermits, and in a later age founded innumerable religious orders and congregations. This spirit is still actively promoting the worship of the Triune God, and the religious life and welfare of the faithful. Confraternities are for the Catholic laity what retreats are for religious, viz., they afford opportunities and incentives for the spread of religion and the perfection of their members.

It is difficult to determine at what date guilds and confraternities originated; they belong to the very nature of the Catholic religion, and their origin is inseparable from that of the Church itself. We know that religious associations existed very early, although they seem to have been established in greater numbers and for more varied objects between the eleventh and the fifteenth century.

In the Catholic Church a devotion, pious practice or association

is good and beneficial only in so far as it follows the lines laid down by the Church, and is a living branch in union with her and permeated by her spirit. If it is to prosper and enjoy any official status, it must, if it affects faith, public worship or our ultimate salvation, not be a rival to the Church, but submit to her authority and be incorporated into her. Hence we have to ask: What position is occupied by confraternities in the Catholic Church? How do they stand with regard to parochial organization? In what relation do the members stand to one another?

1. The first question may be briefly answered as follows: No confraternity can be formed or continue to exist unless it has the approval of the Church, which approval puts it into living connection with the Church, and admits it to membership of her body. A confraternity cannot meet in a private chapel, or anywhere except in a church. It is through their parish church that confraternities enter into living connection with the Catholic Church, and so are put into a position to realize the ends for which they were established.

2. This brings us to the second question, which concerns the relation between confraternities and parochial organization. They are subordinate to it, so as to be parts of it, while the parish church is the mother church of each confraternity, and the parish priest is its president. The meetings of the confraternity must not clash with the services of the church, and the members must act as parishioners, while their private devotions form part of the public worship of the whole parish.

3. Finally, how are members of a confraternity connected with one another? What has already been said will enable us to answer this question. The confraternities are spiritual associations in communion with the body of the Church, and in the same way all

the members of each confraternity belong to the Communion of Saints, which exists in the Catholic Church alone, and not apart from her. All the faithful are bound together in this communion, and, in the confraternities, whatever good and meritorious work is performed by one member benefits all the rest, and the prayers, graces, sacrifices, struggles, satisfaction and virtues of the individual belong to all the members in common.

Such is the nature and official position of confraternities in the Church; they are based upon unity, and being one with the Church in their submission and obedience, they preserve in all things unity of spirit, and aim at doing only what the Church does and approves.

Every religious exercise is intended to honor God, or to promote religion, or to edify. Such, therefore, are the aims of all confraternities, and their work is the same as that of the parish churches; the members desire to give glory to God, to hear His word, to obtain the graces necessary to salvation, to pray and to make intercession for others. The Catholic Church, and following her example, each parish church, makes regulations for the worship of God, the practice of religion, and piety of life. These regulations are made for people in general, so that all the faithful of every age and rank may, according to their circumstances, be able to work out their salvation. But many desire to do more, and to serve God and their neighbors with greater care and perfection. It is to furnish such persons with the opportunity of doing more, that most confraternities exist.

The mutual prayer of their members for one another is one of the chief advantages of confraternities; for such prayer proceeds from the Communion of Saints and is highly efficacious. We pray very little because we have so many distractions and are so deeply immersed in worldly affairs; but our fellow members pray for

each of us and thus make reparation for our individual neglect, and enable us to share in the benefits of their piety. Our prayer is often unheard because of our sins and frailties, but our fellow members come to our assistance and make good the deficiencies of our prayers. They do not forget those who have passed away from their midst, who are now suffering in purgatory, but offer their own prayers and good works for the release of the departed. How good it is for us to be united with brothers and sisters by such a bond! Finally we must remember the graces and blessings which the Church attaches to membership of confraternities. A confraternity that neither possessed nor desired any indulgences would not be a truly Catholic association.

The advantages of membership are very great, for each confraternity aims at increasing the practice of religion and at encouraging its members to avail themselves fully of the opportunities of grace that the Church offers. The Church has always encouraged and protected the growth of confraternities, and no one ought to hold aloof and refuse to be enrolled in one or other of these pious associations, for, if he conscientiously complies with its rules, he will attain more easily to temporal and eternal happiness.

51. Conclusion. The Benefits of Christianity

Our holy religion is the greatest benefit bestowed on us, for it is our chief incentive to virtue, and without virtue no true happiness is possible. Whoever abandons the way of virtue, renounces all claim to happiness, and hurries toward perdition. This is an acknowledged fact, the truth of which we all know by experience. Religion alone keeps us from vice and leads us on to virtue, thus religion paves the way to true and permanent happiness.

Human legislation cannot make men virtuous, but religion is able

to accomplish this task, because it exerts so great an influence on our minds. Reason and conscience tell us what to do and what to avoid; but the voice of reason is weak in comparison with that of religion, which speaks to us with the authority of a supremely wise and powerful Ruler, to whose will all nature is subject. Religion teaches us the commandments of a loving Father, who desires nothing so much as our good, and would fain see us happy. His laws have far more force than the voice of reason, and we are constrained to obey, since religion promises to the good a reward surpassing all that we can imagine, namely eternal salvation.

Our Divine Saviour tells us that the just shall enjoy life everlasting—is not this promise enough to spur us all on to practise virtue? But the sinner is threatened with never-ending punishment, such as no human being can describe. Surely no one, who believes our Lord's words, would dare to commit a sin, if he remembered this threat at the moment of temptation.

Wrongdoing is forbidden and punished by human legislation, which has some effect in deterring men from sin, although the effect is slight in comparison with that of religion, and criminals frequently escape punishment if they are cunning and resourceful. But there is no escape from God's punishments, and religion extends her dominion to matters untouched by human laws. She directs us to a Judge who is just, and knows all things; to whom the darkest night is clear as noonday; whose eye penetrates the innermost recesses of men's hearts, beholding everything. Who would dare to do wrong in the sight of this omniscient Judge?

There would be but little evil in the world, if men accepted the truths of religion with firm, unwavering faith, and stored them in their hearts, calling them to mind whenever occasions of sin present themselves. Many sins and much suffering would thus be averted,

and the full beauty and joy of the Christian life would be seen and appreciated.

Religion unites all men in the bond of brotherly love. Our Lord taught us that we are all members of one family, children of the same Father, subjects of the same King. Love is the chief characteristic of Christians, for our religion is one of love, and where love exists there also we find peace and joy. There is no place for hatred and malice, quarrels and lawsuits, abuse and slander. Would that we were all inspired by this kindly spirit of Christianity, and filled with charity towards our brethren! If it were so, the world would cease to be a vale of tears, and would become an earthly paradise, a land of peace and joy.

Christianity tells people of every age and rank and of both sexes, what to do, and what to avoid. It teaches husbands to love their wives, as Christ loved the Church (Ephes., v, 25); and wives to be subject to their husbands, and not depart from them, nor may the husband put away his wife (1 Cor., vii, 10, 11). If all married people were guided by these rules, peace and harmony would prevail in their homes. Christianity bids parents bring up their children in the discipline and correction of the Lord (Ephes., v, 4); and children to obey their parents in the Lord, honoring their father and mother. If only parents and children acted thus, the young would be brought up with great care, and in their turn would be grateful to their elders. Christianity calls upon young men and maidens to be modest and pure in word and deed; to look upon chastity as their greatest treasure, and to shrink from doing evil in the sight of God, from whom nothing is hidden.

If this teaching were taken as their rule of life, our young people would spare themselves much sorrow and many tears.

Religion is the greatest boon ever bestowed upon the human race.

Let us value it as it deserves, and make it our guide and companion through life. Let us resolve that no one by mocking words or specious arguments shall rob us of this treasure, and let us impress deeply upon our hearts, so that our whole way of life may be influenced thereby, the saving doctrines which our Divine Lord brought down from Heaven, and which His Apostles proclaimed on earth, testifying with their blood to the truth. Our forefathers valued the faith more highly than anything else in the world; let us, like them, live and die in it.

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